

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

FIRST QUARTER.

(Condensed from Peabody's Select Notes.)

Lesson VIII. Feb. 21. Jer. 36: 1-19.31.

JEHOIAKIM'S WICKEDNESS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."—Heb. 3: 15.

EXPLANATORY.

THE BOOK BURNED BY THE KING. 19. He hid them. So as to be safe from the anger of the king, should he refuse to believe the words they had written. The princes were uncertain how the king would receive them. They knew he was bad, and could only faintly hope for his repentance.

20. And they (the princes) went in to the king into the court. The inner court of the palace. They laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe. So that it would be safe if the king did not take kindly their report of his message. And told all the words in the ears of the king. It was of the utmost importance that he should know them. His own salvation and the safety of the kingdom depended on it.

21. So the king sent Jehudi. The same descendant of a noble house, an under-officer, who had been sent by the princes at first to Baruch to read the book to him. To fetch the scroll. He was not satisfied with a mere second-hand report. The roll is the book Jeremiah had written. Books were then made of a long strip of parchment or papyrus rolled upon a stick, and written in columns across the whole breadth of the roll, so that a column at a time could be unrolled and read. And Jehudi read it. The princes standing by and hearing it for the second time.

22. The king sat in the winter house. In common parlance, the lower apartment or simply of the house; the upper is the "alley," which is the summer house. Every respectable dwelling has both, and they are familiarly called "the winter and the summer house." The winter house is the interior or more sheltered room. In the ninth month. The ninth month corresponds nearly to our December. It was therefore the cold and rainy season of the year. There was a fire on the hearth burning. Rather in the fire-pan. They have no chimneys, and hearths are unknown in the East. Braziers containing charcoal are placed in a depression in the middle of a room for purposes of warming. The Orientals still use pots made of burnt earthenware for warming, instead of fire-places. These pots have the form of a large pitcher, and are usually placed in a hollow place in the middle of the room.

23. When Jehudi had read three or four leaves. Rather columns of the writing across the roll. He, the king, or if Jehudi, it was by the king's orders, and was really his work (ver. 28). It seems probable that after Jehudi had read three or four columns, the king snatched the roll from his hands, and taking the penknife used for sharpening the scribe's pens, cut up the roll himself.

24. Yet they were not afraid. This expresses the writer's astonishment at the depth of depravity, the intense hardness of heart, the mental blindness and dullness of the king and his attendants, as if they imagined that burning the roll would destroy the Word of God, or shutting their eyes would ward off the lightning stroke. Nor any of his servants. Not the princes, but his personal attendants, chosen because they were like minded with himself.

25. And the king commanded Jerahmeel, etc. These were probably among the "servants" referred to in ver. 24. They must have been of noble houses. To take Baruch... and Jeremiah. The king would not only destroy the prophetic book, but also the fountain whence it sprang, so that no more such prophecies could be written by them, and so that no others would dare to write them. Even if he had succeeded, the result would not have saved him. But the Lord hid them. By some unknown providence, or guidance, saved them from being discovered.

26. The contrast is very instructive between the way Jehoiakim treated God's Word and the way it was treated by his father (see 2 Chron. 35: 14-15). He did all that was possible to reform the people. And in consequence the danger was escaped. Jehoiakim, on the contrary, refused to repent, did nothing for the people, and calamity fell swift and terrible upon him.

27. Then the book restored. The contrast is very instructive between the way Jehoiakim treated God's Word and the way it was treated by his father (see 2 Chron. 35: 14-15). He did all that was possible to reform the people. And in consequence the danger was escaped. Jehoiakim, on the contrary, refused to repent, did nothing for the people, and calamity fell swift and terrible upon him.

28. Take thee again another roll, etc. The entire book was re-written; and the record adds, "There were added besides unto them many other like words."

29. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim... This is the Lord, etc. This dignified and fearful word of Jehoiakim the prophet is commanded to go to him and proclaim, fearless of danger. We must suppose that the heroic prophet went. What a contrast between this man, morally hardened, and impious king, boistering with wrath against the prophet and against God, and this heroic prophet, bearing the message of God to the royal tyrant, facing death firmly, and never shrinking from any duty which his divine Master enjoined!

throne of David. His son Jehoiachin, 18 years old, attempted to do it for three months, but the whole time the land was occupied by Nebuchadnezzar's army, and Jerusalem was in a state of siege (2 Kings 24: 8-17). His death body shall be cast out. See 25: 18. 31. I will punish him and his seed. Why, slain, his kingdom destroyed; his son was carried in chains to Babylon. But they hearkened not. This implies that they might have been saved from the threatened evil, if they had repented, as in the case of Nineveh under Jonah's preaching. Otherwise there would have been no use in warning them. The warnings were for the purpose of keeping them from the ruin before them; to make the way of transgressors so hard that no one would continue to walk therein.

THE KING'S FOLLY. Only fools imagine that stopping the fire-bell will put out the fire; or leaving up the doctor's prescription will cure the disease; or refusing to hear the warnings against an evil way will prevent the consequences; or stopping the cars to unpleasant truths will destroy the truths. The king only suffered more on account of his hearing the book. And by that act he shut the door to better things in his own face, and threw away his last opportunity of safety.

An Unexpected Lesson. "I didn't enjoy the sermon at all this morning," said Mrs. Fisk. "It seemed to me Dr. Prescott went out of his way to say odd things, and I am sorry to notice he is beginning to put on little pulpit airs, something I especially detest in any minister."

"What do you mean by little pulpit airs, wife?" "Why, didn't you notice how every little while he shrugged a shoulder," and Mrs. Fisk drew up one shoulder in exact imitation of the minister's movement. "Then there was an affected way of glancing with great rapidity from right to left, as if startled by his own ideas."

Again Mrs. Fisk mimicked the pastor, turning her eyes from side to side in so ludicrous a manner that her husband laughed outright, and little Dot burst into a loud peal of laughter too. "It's such queer little mannerisms as those," she added, "that I call pulpit airs, and as I said before, I detest them. I only wish some one would tell Dr. Prescott how he spoils the effect of what he is saying by assuming such looks and attitudes."

Mrs. Fisk and her husband had just returned from church, and little Dot, seated on the floor, was paying such fixed attention to what her mother was saying, that her father, after laughing a little, said, "And what do you think of pulpit airs, little Dot?" "I-a-test 'em!" said Dot emphatically.

This caused a merry laugh at Dot's expense, for the little tot, who was particularly fond of getting hold of words altogether too large for her little pucker of a mouth. The dinner-bell ringing just then effected a change in the subject. It was only Monday afternoon however, that Dr. Prescott and Mrs. Fisk, and the servant, thinking her mistress was at home, admitted him. On discovering that Mrs. Fisk was away, the girl returned to the parlor and was surprised to find Dot carrying on what appeared to be quite an animated conversation with the minister.

When Mrs. Fisk returned she saw by the pastor's card in the salver on the table, and later in the afternoon as she sat sewing, with Dot seated as usual on the floor, surrounded by her beloved dolls, the waitress in passing looked into the room and said: "I suppose you saw Dr. Prescott's card, ma'am?" Mrs. Fisk replied that she had seen it, and was sorry that she had not seen the gentleman himself.

As the girl passed on, Dot looked up, and remarked in a tone of great satisfaction: "I seed him and I telled him I-a-test pulpit airs." "What?" Mrs. Fisk started, and spoke with such energy, that Dot started too. Then she added more quietly, "Dot telled mamma what you said to Dr. Prescott."

The child began with a satisfied air, as if sure of commendation for having so worthily performed a needed duty. "I telled him I did a-test pulpit airs. And he say: 'What do you mean, little girl?' And I say: 'You sticks up your shoulders, and you goes this way, and Dot opened her brown eyes to their utmost extent and wriggled her little body about in her desire to look as wild as possible."

"What else did he say, and what did you say?" asked Mrs. Fisk, her voice fairly trembling with excitement and anxiety. "He say, 'Who telled you that, little girl?' And I says, 'Miss Mittikins, and Dot threw back her head and laughed merrily."

"Was that all he said?" asked her mamma. "No, he say, 'Who is Miss Mittikins?' And I say, 'Old Mother Hubbard is.' And he laugh and say, 'Who ole Mother Hubbard is?' And I say, 'Little ole Marm Hubbard, and the unconscious Dot laughed the harder."

Mrs. Fisk felt a little relieved. She had shown such a predilection for silk mittens all winter that her husband and sportively called her Mrs. Mittikins, and of course Dot had learned the name by heart in a very short time. Then, because of her fondness for a rather shapely house dress, he had occasionally dubbed her Old Mother Hubbard. The application, "Little Marm Hubbard, fetch-it," Mr. Fisk had applied to Dot herself, because of her alacrity in running little errands and knowing as he did that the longer a name the better she would like it.

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"No! truly rooly, I didn't say mamma or papa one single time." Then Mrs. Fisk added lightly, not wishing to impress the matter further on the childish mind. "You must not speak to any one of that again. Now remember, Dot!" And the innocent Dot reassured her, promising "truly rooly" never to tell to Dr. Prescott again nor to any one else, "ever any more."

In taking the matter over with her husband that night, Mrs. Fisk concluded with the remark: "I did not realize for an instant that the little midget would understand in the least what I was saying, much less treasure up and remember it. But it shows that parents cannot be too careful what they say before children, and especially about others. As to my minister, I am simply ashamed of it, and I acknowledge frankly my criticisms were unnecessarily uncharitable and severe. I can only say I have learned a lesson not soon to be forgotten."

Not very long afterward, Dr. Prescott preached an admirable sermon to which Mrs. Fisk listened with a forced air of placid attention, although her heart fluttered in little uneven bounds at several points in the discourse. There was entire absence of any superfluous mannerisms, but only a very earnest, impressive air, as the good man admonished Christian parents to beware lest their style of conversation prove anything but beneficial to the younger members of the family.

He reminded his hearers that, let a preacher be ever so faithful and ever so sincere, his teachings would lose all power and his precepts all value, in fact his influence for good would be totally lost upon the young people of the household, if he were criticised unfavorably in their hearing. A single remark, he argued, of a detrimental character, was sufficient to destroy the most earnest efforts on the pastor's part. And the sermon was one which could be profit by many a well-meaning but thoughtless parent.—Christian Observer

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