

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

OCTOBER 19, 1879.

THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH.—Hebrews 11: 1-10.

EXPOSITION.

FAITH, verse 1.—It implies both a supernatural evidence of God and of the things of God; a kind of spiritual light exhibited to the soul, and a supernatural sight or perception thereof. Accordingly the Scripture speaks of God's giving sometimes light, sometimes a power of discerning it. So St. Paul: "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And elsewhere the same apostle speaks of "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." By this twofold operation of the Holy Spirit—having the eyes of our soul both opened and enlightened—we see the things which the natural eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard. We have a prospect of the invisible things of God; we see the spiritual world which is all round about us, and yet no more discerned by our natural faculties than if it had no being; and we see the eternal world, piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity. Clouds and darkness then rest upon it no more, but we already see the glory which shall be revealed.—Wesley. Verse 2—the elders ... good report, the ancestors of the Jewish people, held in great reverence for their sanctity and wisdom, "the fathers" elsewhere spoken of, Rom. 9: 5. Heb. 11: 1. Verse 3—by faith we understand, in that that we may be seen in possession of the promise...

...of that which appears to be the substance of the plant; the grain, the moss, the fungus which is above, spirit, viz. faith, leads us to apprehend that this has not been so in the first instance, that the visible world has not been made out of apparent materials.—Alford. Gen. 1: 1. Psalm 23: 6. 9. Verse 4—more excellent service than Cain; the distinction is not in the quantity but in the quality of the sacrifice, Gen. 4: 4. Abel gave his first and his best; and it may be that Abel had already learned the doctrine, so fully embodied in the subsequent sacrifices of the tabernacle, that "with unshedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9: 22), and the text states that the excellence was in the faith of the offerer, rather than in the offering. He being dead, yet speaketh in reference to Gen. 4: 10; but the W. still speaks to us and asserts the excellency of faith in worship. Verse 5—by faith Enoch, Gen. 5: 24. This faith was exhibited in a life of abstinence from wine and devotion; "walking with God" was accompanied by a constant consciousness of acceptance with God, and was rewarded by a deathless translation to everlasting life. Verse 6—but without faith it is impossible; the men of Enoch leads the writer to refer to a general principle. Must believe that he is so faith "is the evidence of things hoped for." The rewarder seeks him; faith is "the substance of things hoped for," 1 Tim. 4: 10. John 3: 18. Verse 7—by faith, Noah, Gen. 6: 13, 14, 22; he condemned the world, "he is said to condemn another who by his deed shows what another ought to have done, and because he did not do it convicts him of a fault, and shows his liability to punishment." The righteousness which is by faith. See Gen. 6: 8. Ezek. 14: 14-20. 2 Peter 2: 5. Faith was the chief feature of that righteousness which the sacred history had attributed to Noah. Verse 8—by faith Abraham, Gen. 12: 1-4. Acts 7: 1. Verse 9—by faith Isaac was promised, Gen. 22: 17. He dwelt in it as if it belonged to another, and built in it no permanent abode. A city which hath foundations, "the Jerusalem which is above," a glorious contrast to the tent placed on the ground and easily transported.

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LESSON.

I. Faith defined.—By what two expressions does the writer define faith? We may find illustrations of the truth of this definition in the ordinary life of men. "Yonder husbandman, though snow lies on the hill-tops and frost bites the air, and nights are long and days are short, and woods are bare and birds are mute, believing that spring, summer and autumn will come, gives his labour to the naked field, and so faith ploughs the soil." Yonder sailor, who sees the land sink beneath the wave, boldly pushes out on his charts and trembling needle. In him we see faith plunging the sea.—Hand-book of Illustrations. 11. Objects seen by faith.—The chapter mentions many of the "things not seen," which are realized by faith. A great event of the far past, verse 3.—The world's existence is apprehended by our senses; we see the sky, the earth and the sea, but we see how they came into being only by faith in the revelation which declares that they were created out of nothing by the word of God, Gen. 1: 1-3. God, ver. 6, 27.—With the eye we see an earthly father, his form, face and features. Faith brings "our Father in heaven" so near, that we are as certain of his presence and his love as we are of the same things in a father by the fireside. Providence, verse 5.—Who is mentioned in this verse? But every other person mentioned in this chapter is an example of the same faith. A weaver stands by his loom, controls its movements, handles his shuttles, makes his cloth. All this we can see. But we cannot see him who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," by any other sight than that of faith. By it we can. Noah saw, by faith, God working for the punishment of sinful men; Abraham saw God working so as to give the land of promise to his own descendants; Moses saw God working so as to make his poor brick-making countrymen great soldiers and mighty conquerors. The heavenly state, verse 16.—Abraham saw with the eye the Jordan over which his camp was fixed, the stars in the overhanging night; but faith, the eye of the soul, beheld another country, even a heavenly; so on he went, from place to place, content with having God for his guide, and heaven for his home, verse 10; Heb. 13: 14, 12; 22. Rev. 21: 2, 14. The results of actions, Psalm 11: 6, 7, 14: 5. 1 Peter 3: 12.—The result of an action may be long separated from its cause. Wicked men presume, believing men trust and walk uprightly, Eccles. 8: 11. Two examples are given in illustration of this: who? Noah was an object of ridicule whilst the ark was building and the workers of iniquity flourished. In the end, he and his household were saved: the rest were lost. Who is the other instance? ver. 24-26. Here both sides of the question are very plainly stated: "affliction with the people of God," and "the pleasures of sin for a season." Which did Moses choose? What determined his choice? The result justified his choice. He was honoured by his God, honoured by his people, honoured by the church for evermore. Go over the points selected as illustrations of the power of faith. Believers seeing these things "unseen," grow stronger, and are "filled with the fruits of righteousness," which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

III. The fruits of faith.—I. The true spirit of worship. Abel was an example of this, verse 4; Gen. 4: 4. 1 John 3: 12, with verse 6. If we copy this earliest example of worship, we shall bring to God the same spirit as that which God desires in that spirit which is the true spirit of worship. II. The fruits of faith.—I. The true spirit of worship. Abel was an example of this, verse 4; Gen. 4: 4. 1 John 3: 12, with verse 6. If we copy this earliest example of worship, we shall bring to God the same spirit as that which God desires in that spirit which is the true spirit of worship. II. The fruits of faith.—I. The true spirit of worship. Abel was an example of this, verse 4; Gen. 4: 4. 1 John 3: 12, with verse 6. If we copy this earliest example of worship, we shall bring to God the same spirit as that which God desires in that spirit which is the true spirit of worship.

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LIGHT ON THE GOLDEN TEXT.

Heb. 11: 27.—"But by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." I. The person of whom the verse speaks.—This was Moses. When he was forty years old, he cast in his lot with his countrymen, who were slaves. This step involved a great loss; the dignity of a prince, the splendour of a palace, the treasures in Egypt. It was the entrance on a dark future: danger from the wrath of the king, reproach and affliction. Yet the step was taken. 11. The principle on which Moses acted. Faith, for "he endured, as seeing him who is invisible;" he lived in a realization of the Divine presence, and in the exercise of devotion, verse 6. He believed that God ruled in the kingdoms of men. He looked down upon his own people labouring in the brick fields, and upon Pharaoh with his hosts. Moses believed that the righteous Lord loved righteousness, and therefore forsook the pleasures of sin. He believed that the mighty God could and would see to it that "it should be well with the righteous." "He had respect to the recompense of the reward." Upon this faith a long and noble life was passed. 111. Have faith in God.—Amongst the many things you see by sense, see the invisible faith. Pursues of sin, worldly wealth, worldly friendships, will lose their charms. From such a faith, true devotion will spring, as in Abel and Enoch; earnest effort after salvation, as in Noah; a heavenly mind, as in Abraham; a brave, enduring courage, as in Moses. "Faith as a grain of mustard seed" is very small, but it has life in it, and is very different in its nature from a grain of sand. Then when a grain of mustard seed is placed in a favourable position for growth, the omnipotence of God will work with it, and it will produce a herb, which in eastern countries, is sometimes as large as a small tree. So our faith

must be living, and when it is exercised in and by a sincere and earnest heart, then the omnipotence of God will work with it, or by occasion of it, to remove mountains of sins or difficulties, or to accomplish miracles in Providence, and especially in grace, for the advantage of the believer, or of those for whom he prays. True faith renders everything we present acceptable to God. It is what "we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive." It is "the works of faith and the labours of love" which are pleasing to God. From Heb. 11: we learn that by faith God's ancient servants got deliverance from evils, they obtained manifold blessings, they achieved the most wonderful exploits, and attained, we doubt not, high positions and possessions in the heavenly world. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Let us most earnestly seek for this mighty, God-honouring trust. Then as a telescope (or a "bring-em-near," as a sailor called it) enables us clearly to discern what would be invisible to the naked eye, so by faith we may see "him who is invisible;" as well as that by faith we may get all God's promises fulfilled to us, Heb. 11: 33. 2 Cor. 1: 20.

WHAT FAITH CAN DO. Heb. 11: 27.—"For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

I. About faith.—"Invisible" means "not able to be seen." How could any one see what is invisible? Yet our Lesson tells us of one who did this. It was Moses. You know the story of his danger when he was a little child, and what his mother did to save him. It was not she who saved him, but she trusted in God that he would save him. This was having faith in God, and by his faith he was saved. Moses was a man of God, and he was a man of God's word. Yet he had never seen God, for "no man hath seen God at any time. But Moses believed in God as surely as though he could see him and could hear his voice. His faith was then like sight, but it was the sight of the mind. And this sight of God with the mind, led him to fear God and to trust him.

11. What faith does.—It helps us to understand what is past. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." It helps us to understand what is to come; what God has warned us of, and what he has prepared for them that love him. God told Noah of the judgment he was about to send upon the earth as a punishment for sin. Noah's faith moved him with fear, and he prepared an ark to the saving of his house. And so faith now moves people to flee for refuge from a greater danger than better ark. Through faith Abraham and those who followed him, cared not for this world, but sought a better country. Faith helps to endure wrong, to bear reproach, to work righteousness, to obtain the promise.

111. How faith may be got.—It is so blessed a thing that we may well be glad to do whatever is needed to get it. Like all that is best for us, faith is the gift of God. It can only be had by "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Sin must be cast out of the soul, if we would have faith in it. We must yield our hearts to Christ, and trust in him for all we need, now and for ever. We must do to him, as a little child trusts in his father and his mother for all his needs.

SECTION VI.—QUESTION 19. (THIRD LESSON.)

Q. Has he not also given us certain rules to direct us in our conduct towards our enemies? A. To direct us in our conduct towards our enemies, our Lord has given us this rule: "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them when they spitefully use you and persecute you." Matt. v. 44.

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

BEGINNINGS.

There was a boy once who saved a whole town from death, by finding out the danger when it was only a very small one, and stopping it then. This was how it happened: the town was the little seaport of Haarlem, on the coast of Holland. Like the other places along this coast, Haarlem lies very low, and if it were not protected by strongly-made barriers, called dykes, it would be in danger of being altogether overflowed by the sea. As it is, the waves dash themselves against the dyke and fall down harmlessly; but let there be ever so small a hole and the water will find its way through. At first only slowly trickling through drops by drops, but gradually increasing in force until it breaks down the barriers and rushes in a mighty flood over all the land, carrying away property, overthrowing houses, and drowning man and beast. Once in the history of Haarlem such a flood took place, destroying farms and villages as it rose higher and higher; and after this you may think how carefully the townspeople would look to their dykes. A man was chosen whose business it was to take care of the dykes and to see that they were always in good order. At the time of which I write, more than two hundred years ago, the dykes were under the charge of a man named Dreken, who lived with his fatherless nephew, a boy of eight years old, close to the seashore. It happened one October evening that little Joseph had been sent by his uncle to the docks to fetch a pair of pitch. It was late when he started homeward, and the moon was already rising. He had gone some way when he heard a low, rumbling sound. He listened, and felt sure that it came from the dyke

above him; at least he would go and see if anything was wrong. With some difficulty the little barefooted lad climbed up the wet, slippery boards and got on to the outer dyke. There the cause of the noise was plainly to be seen in a small round hole, through which a steady stream of water was making its way. Joseph knew enough about dykes to understand fully what would happen if the hole were not quickly stopped up; but what had he to stop it up with? The hole was only a small one, it was true, but the water was already pouring through so violently that he was wet to the skin. A thought struck him—he put in his forefinger and found that it exactly filled up the hole! But now he durst not withdraw it, for he knew that if he were to do so now the danger would be greater than ever,—not to himself alone but to all the town. He stood listening, and caught in the distance the sound of the rising tide, and he knew that soon the waves would be beating against this weakest part of the dyke. He shouted and shouted, comforting himself with the hope that before then some one would come to his help, but no one heard him.

There he stayed, half dead with cold and wet, and his hand aching so much from the cramped position in which he was obliged to keep it that he hardly knew how to bear the pain. Now and then he murmured one short prayer, "Lord, help me to keep this water out; save this country and my poor mother;" but by-and-by he became too tired to think of anything but his pain, and at last, as morning was beginning to dawn, the help came. As the clergyman was returning from the house of a sick man with whom he had been spending the night, he heard a faint moaning sound from the dyke, and clambering up he found little Joseph standing by the hole, so weak and tired that he could hardly ask him to send for his uncle. And now the town was quickly roused; people came running to the dyke, and under the care of Joseph's uncle the hole was properly stopped up and the weak boards strengthened before any harm was done. And so by the bravery of one boy the danger was checked in the very beginning, and a whole city saved from ruin.

The wise man in the book of Proverbs says that the beginning of a quarrel is like the letting out of water. One angry word provokes another, till at last they come pouring out in a torrent that is very difficult to stop; and so King Solomon's advice is to "leave off contention before it be meddled with." There is an Eastern fable which tells of a man lying in his hut and seeing a shadow fall across the floor. On looking up he saw a great camel standing at the door and begging to be allowed to put his head into the shady room. The man refused but the camel promised to put in nothing but his head, so he let him have his way. By-and-by the man saw that the camel had placed one foot over the threshold. He grumbled much at this, but he was too lazy to get up and shut the door, so he lay still. Again he looked, and this time the camel was half in the house. Then the man was frightened, and sprang up and tried to push him back, but it was too late, for now he had come so far that he could not drive him out, and thus the camel got the house for his own.

So it is with temptations and bad habits. They seem very little at first, but if, instead of driving them back, we let them have their way, they get stronger and stronger, until at last they become quite too strong for us. And, therefore, an old writer has said, "Withstand the beginnings"—struggle against the beginnings of wrong habits.—Sunday Magazine.

HOW MAGGIE MADE A PRESENT.

BY S. ANNIE FROST. "I wish I had some money, all my own," said little Maggie Ford, looking up from her patchwork with a sigh that was comically solemn from such a rosy mouth. "Money, Maggie?" said her mother kindly; "what do you want to do with money? I thought papa and I provided for all our little girl's wants and pleasures." "I don't want it for myself, mamma. I want to buy a doll for Nellie Grey. She is such a nice little girl. She goes to our school, and has no mother or aunt or anybody who knows about little girls, as you do. She wears queer dresses and aprons that her papa buys ready made in the store, and they don't fit nicely. When we go to recess all the girls have a doll but Nellie; but her papa says he can't spend money in that sort of nonsense. Is it nonsense to love dolls, mamma?" "Perhaps Nellie's papa does not know that dressing dolls teaches little girls to sew. He may think they are only play things. Suppose I buy a doll for you to give to Nellie Grey?" "But you will give it to her then. I should like so much to give it to her myself; but mine have all been played with, and she might not like an old one." "Suppose you make her a new one?" "O mamma! how could a little girl like me make a doll?"

"I will show you. Put away your patch-work, and find me the oldest doll in your play-room; the very worst one you have." Maggie soon found it—a large, well worn dolly, whose head and one arm were gone, the saw dust out of one leg, and the color of whose body was like a very dirty old housecloth. "There mamma. I am sure that is the worst." "I hope so," said Mrs. Ford, laughing. "If there are any more as bad as this, you had better turn your baby house into a hospital at once. Now, Maggie, take your scissors and strip that doll all to pieces where you see the stitches, and save all the saw dust in this paper box." Maggie worked silently for some time, and then held up a number of odd-shaped pieces of cloth as the result of her work. Mrs. Ford took from her own work-basket a piece of strong white cotton, and showed Maggie how to cut a new doll's body from the pieces of the old one, making a new arm to replace the missing one. She then sewed these pieces together as her mother directed, and stuffed them with sawdust (as she had a smooth, new body for the doll, very white and nearly finished. It took her sewing-time for three days to accomplish this, but she was well pleased with the idea of making her present to Nellie's mamma of her own gift. "Now, mamma, I have made a doll that I think is much better than the old one," said Maggie, holding up her new money." "Mine?" cried Maggie. "I spent all my savings-bank in money on my birthday." "So you did; then you must earn some more. I want a dress to put on pieces to alter, and if you will do it for me I will pay you enough to buy the heat." More busy afterwards soon accomplished this and Maggie herself took the doll to the store, fitted on the shoulders a head with eyes as blue and as bright as her own, and found enough left of her money to also buy a pair of blue kid boots for the dolly. "Isn't she a beauty, mamma?" she cried, when the head had been finally fastened on. "Now, may I take her?" There is a piece of my blue cloth in my drawer, and you have given me the dress to little Mollie Craig, so I won't want the piece to mend it; and I have a nice piece of edging Aunt Carrie gave me that will trim the underclothes. I should like to make her." "Will this make an apron?" said Mrs. Ford, holding up a small piece of black silk. "I saved it for your new doll." "Oh! I had rather put it on Nellie's." "It is yours, dear. Do just as you please with it." "I can make a hat out of the pieces of straw you gave me when you took your old bonnet apart; the pieces that were in the trimming will make two or three doll's hats, and I can make a little sash of the delaine, like the ladies' walking suits." "She will be a very stylish one, I am sure," said Mrs. Ford smiling. "Don't hurry too much." "Oh! no, indeed. I want this to be the very nicest dress I ever made." Very proud and very happy was Maggie when the doll was dressed at last, and very pretty the miniature little lady looked in her neat walking-dress, stylish hat, and blue boots. It was hard to wait all night and until school-time the next morning before taking the doll to school, and when Maggie started at last, she had to dance along nearly all the way, she was so happy. The bell had not rung when she arrived, and a group of little girls were in the yard, talking about and talking, as Maggie came to the gate. Her eye singled out at once a little girl who stood apart from the rest, looking wistfully at the dolls who were taking an airing before being put to sleep in the luncheon-baskets till recess time. She was a pretty little girl, but as Maggie had said, her dress showed the want of a kind mother's care, though it was not poor nor ragged. "Nellie," said Maggie softly to this little girl, "do you think this is a pretty doll?" "O Maggie! what a beauty!—Who gave you?" "I made it myself—that is I made the body and the clothes, but I bought the head." "Made it? I never thought of that. Will you show me how to make one?" "Certainly I will. But Nellie, I did not make this for myself?" "It is for a present to you." "To me? You made it for me? Oh! thank you!" "I am so glad you think it so pretty." "It is beautiful. I will give it to Maggie. But," and the child looked very grave, "are you sure you don't want it yourself?" "Very sure," said Maggie, laughing merrily. "Why all the pleasure there was in making it was in knowing it was for you. Oh! there is the bell," and kissing Nellie, Maggie followed in the line of little girls going into the school house. "Mamma," said Maggie gratefully, after