



LESSON VII.—AUGUST 12, 1906.

**The Parable of the Two Sons.**

Luke xv., 11-32.

**Golden Text.**

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord.—Mal. iii., 7.

**Home Readings.**

- Monday, August 6.—Luke xv., 11-32.
- Tuesday, August 7.—Luke xv., 1-10.
- Wednesday, August 8.—Luke vii., 36-50.
- Thursday, August 9.—Luke ix., 1-9.
- Friday, August 10.—Matt. xviii., 1-14.
- Saturday, August 11.—Hos. xiv., 1-9.
- Sunday, August 12.—Ezek. xviii., 19-32.

(Davis W. Clark.)

A son in a noble and wealthy family, chafing under parental restraint, or having exhausted local means of dissipation and sighing for fresh fields of voluptuous conquest, inconsiderately requests an ante-mortem division of the estate. The indulgent father makes it. Perhaps he has no recourse; parental authority is at an end. The son's heart is callous to the appeal of love; sin has indurated him. The guileless youth, the father's pride and joy, has grown the gruff, defiant rebel to whom the amenities of home are insufferable.

In the shortest time possible the infatuated youth tucked the sparkling gems and golden bars, his patrimony in portable form, easily convertible into coin of any country, in the pockets of a money-belt, and, strapping it about his person, he went abroad—perhaps without even a ceremonious farewell!

He wasted his substance. He tossed it in the air (as per derivative), as the farmer does his wheat when he will separate it from the chaff. He lived dissolutely. He was insalvable (as per derivative) while his infatuation lasted. The coincidence of the devoured (literally) patrimony and the universal and extreme famine puts a pathetic touch to the sorry plight of the dissolute spendthrift. He was left behind (as per derivative) in the race. He never, in spite of his infatuated effort and extravagance, so much as reached the glittering goal of his wanton ambition. The gay, revelling party that kept him company while his means held out, swept past him thanklessly and disdainfully when his once plethoric purse was at last empty. He awoke as from a dream—alone! penniless!

With the pertinacity of despair he glued (literally) himself to a foreign land-owner, whom in his prosperity he would have dubbed a 'Gentile dog'—with whom he would have had no intercourse, much less receive a favor from him. In his despair he cleaves to the foreigner so tenaciously that he can not be shaken off. A superlatively disgusting and degrading task is given him,—offensive to all the senses, repugnant to all the ideas of ceremonial cleanliness instilled in his mind from boyhood.

So sharp were the pangs of hunger that he kept coveting the swine their feed—the locust pods he threw down before them. What humiliation, sorrow, despair are compressed in the half-dozen words—'And no man gave unto him.'

At last the hypnotic spell of sin is broken. Self-consciousness, self-control are regained. Memory paints the ancestral home. The flown blessing brightens. What abundance, comfort, care, there extends to the most abject menial! The veriest scul-

lion has such a superabundance that he can pose as a benefactor before the tramp.

'I will!' What a battle-royal has preceded and made possible those talismanic words! Fear, shame, pride have been met and conquered. 'I have sinned' is the correlate of 'I will arise.' Confession absolute and frank, without apology or plea in abatement, shall be made. The penalty and consequences of apostasy, disinheritance, servitude instead of sonship, shall be assumed without a syllable of complaint.

It is done. But how different the sequel from that which the prodigal anticipated! He is met long before he can reach the door where he expected to make his confession and prefer his modest request. The father's compassion, how admirable! Kiss of reconciliation, how sweet! The first robe, richly dyed and embroidered, is cast about the bare and sunburnt shoulders. The signet of rank, is placed upon the wan finger. Bare feet, mark of servitude, are shod with the sandals of a free man. Now follows the joyous banquet.

The murmuring Pharisees can not but see themselves portrayed in the elder son, with his ill-formed, ill-natured protest. The true Messiah had come to heal the sick, raise the dead, find the lost. Will the hale, the unstrayed, those who do not need his kindly offices, begrudge them to their brothers, whose plight is so pitiable and desperate? The climax is reached, the plea unanswerable.

**ANALYSIS AND KEY.**

1. The 'Pearl of Parables.'  
Primary object:  
Intended to justify Jesus' attitude toward publicans and sinners.  
Pictures regenades objects of Divine compassion.
2. Secondary object:  
To picture sin as a revolt against the beneficent Father.
3. Incidental lessons.  
Freedom of the will.  
Folly of sin. Unsatisfying nature.  
Desperate consequences.  
Evangelical penitence.  
Discriminated from legal.  
The process and course of recovery.  
The Divine Compassion.

**THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.**

The primary use of the parable of the Prodigal Son must not be lost sight of in its evangelical and modern applications. By it Jesus sought to justify His kindly and familiar bearing towards publicans and sinners, at which the Pharisees and scribes were so outraged. He showed the veriest regenado of Israel as still the object of Divine compassion, his restoration possible—a thing He earnestly sought.

In its universal, gospel application this 'pearl of parables' pictures sin as a revolt against a beneficent Heavenly Father, whose law is right and just and good.

Here is mirrored the freedom of the will. The son had his own way. He is not let or hindered, except by the pleadings of love and its faithful warnings.

The folly of sin has no more startling exemplification. True as startling; drawn to life! How swift the 'descensus Averno!' How soon the fool and his money are parted! How irrevocable the last estate! Remediless! In the mire with swine!

Who shall ever number the sinners to whom this parable has been the 'open sesame' to a new life? Blessed be the day in which it was spoken! 'I will arise!' 'Father, I have sinned!' The Heavenly Father meets the returning prodigal on the way.

'Lost!' 'Dead!' Here is no minifying of the prodigal's fallen state. Lost to God; lost to heaven; dead in trespasses and sins!

The far country is not a matter of geography. It is expressive of estrangement, of alienation from God.

The Prodigal's theology was bad though,

it showed well the strength of his compunction. It would be impossible for him to ever be his father's hired servant. He is son or nothing.

'Sinned heaven-high and in thy sight.' Here the penitent is strictly orthodox. The turpitude of sin consists in this, that it is done against God. Judah's penitent king knew this when he cried 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned!' With this truth Joseph armed himself when he cried, 'How can I commit this sin against God?'

Solomon is the example for all time of the unsatisfying nature of sin. He

'Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump Of fame: drank early, deeply drank; drank draughts That common millions might have quenched; then died Of thirst, because there was no more to drink.'

Hear his dying protestations of the inadequacy of the sensuous world to satisfy an immortal: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!'

Joy in heaven,—that is the measure of the sinner's peril. Were sin a mere episode, a passing incident, a dilemma, extrication from which is easy, there would be nothing in that to set the joy-bells of the skies a-ringing. It is because the sinner stands on the crumbling edge of hell, on the brink of the lake that burneth with fire, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched; because he stands where there is no eye to pity; no arm to deliver, except the eye and arm divine; snatched as a brand from the burning,—it is because of that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God.

**C. E. Topic.**

Sunday, August 12.—Topic—Christ's life VIII. My favorite parable, and how it helps me. Matt. xiii., 10-17; Ps. cxix., 97-104.

**Junior C. E. Topic.**

**CHOOSING AND FOLLOWING.**

Monday, Aug. 6.—Elijah and Ahab. I. Kings xviii., 17-20.

Tuesday, Aug. 7.—Elijah's question. I. Kings xviii., 21.

Wednesday, Aug. 8.—The test. I. Kings xviii., 22-24.

Thursday, Aug. 9.—The prayer to Baal, I. Kings xviii., 25-29.

Friday, Aug. 10.—The prayer to God. I. Kings xviii., 30-39.

Saturday, Aug. 11.—'Choose you this day.' Josh. xxiv., 15.

Sunday, Aug. 12.—Topic—Choosing and following God. I. Kings xviii., 21, 36-39.

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