

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON XLV.

Nov. 10. } **WHOM THE LORD RECEIVES.** { Luke xviii  
1378. } v 17

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein."—Verse 17.

## HOME STUDIES.

- M. Luke xviii. 20-37... Christ's second coming.  
T. Luke xviii. 1-8... The importunate widow.  
W. Luke xviii. 9-17... The Pharisee and publican.  
Th. Matt xviii. 1-11... "As little children."  
F. Isa. lvi. 15-21... The contrite and humble spirit.  
S. Ps. cxxxviii. 1-8... Respect unto the lowly.  
S. James iv. 6-17... Grace to the humble.

## HELPS TO STUDY.

Our lesson belongs to the teachings of Jesus in Perea, on his last journey to Jerusalem.

This parable is immediately connected with the preceding one, of the unfortunate widow, in which the Master taught us that we ought always to pray.

The present parable is addressed to certain which trusted in themselves. It is therefore a warning for us all, for to what are we more prone than to self-confidence. Self-righteousness is the natural tendency of every unrenewed heart. And this overestimate of their own goodness is generally accompanied by the depreciation of others. They rejoice in being superior to others, and are willing that others should remain inferior. It sets off their own virtue, and thus they are even led to glory over their degradation. Thus men are continually tempted to use the failings and sins of others either as an excuse for their own shortcomings or as a foil for their own imagined virtues.

They carry this spirit even into their devotions. They succeed in deceiving others and even themselves. But there is one they cannot deceive, and Jesus warns us that approaching God in this spirit, we cannot be received. Indeed there can be no real approach, no true and genuine prayer to one who thus trusts in himself.

Our Lord had urged men to persevere in prayer even in the face of delay and apparent refusals. The answer will come, the blessing which tarries will at length reward the importunate seeker.

But, questions the seeker, am I sure to be received, will the answer certainly come? Yes, says Jesus, None are excluded, none are rejected, but those who exclude themselves by the false and foolish spirit of self-confidence in which they come. But all who come in humility, in a child-like spirit will be accepted.

The Master brings before us (ver. 10) a representative of each class, the proud whom the Lord rejects, the meek whom He receives and guides. Both went up to the temple to pray. In the old dispensation there was one place where God's presence was visibly manifested and where the thoughts of men were directed heavenward by outward visible symbols. But this has passed away. The hour has come (John iv. 23) in which everywhere the true worshipper worships the Father in spirit and in truth.

Both went to pray, but what a contrast between them, the very same which is still seen in every age and in every church.

But our lesson, besides these two of the parable, brings before us also the children whom Jesus received and blessed. It might at first seem that this was a totally different subject. But the title of our lesson, "Whom the Lord receives"—shows us how we are to combine them. The publican was received; the children were received; but the Pharisee was not received.

The 17th verse is the key to the whole lesson: Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom as a little child shall not enter therein. To receive the kingdom is to receive the King; and to receive the King is the condition of being received by Him; Christ receives those who receive Him, those who need Him, who come to Him empty and needy and are willing to take everything at His hands. Let us take this thought with us and look first at

## I. THE PHARISEE WHO WAS NOT RECEIVED—VERS. 11, 12.

He does not want to receive. He speaks as one who has received everything. He (Note 1) stands (Note 2) haughtily apart from other worshippers, performing even his devotions to be seen of men, Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16; xxiii. 2-6, and thanks God. This has at first an appearance of goodness and gratitude, but a closer inspection discloses the real spirit of the words. His apparent praise of God is in reality depreciation of his fellows. He compares himself with others, a very foolish and dangerous proceeding (2 Cor. x. 12). He divides the world into two classes, into one of which he puts himself, and all the rest into the other. He boasts of what he is not. It might be perfectly true that he was free from the evils he maintains, and yet no credit to him after all. He might not have been tempted as others had been; or his evil propensities might have led him in other directions; and in any case his self-righteousness is the root and source of all sin which ever springs from selfishness and self-pleasing.

He next proceeds to boast of his good deeds. They were not much at the best, being but the external and ritual acts of fasting and tithes (Note 4), while he neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. But even had they been the highest, the spirit in which he speaks of them, proves their worthlessness. Notice that he actually makes out that he has done more than is required, that God is his debtor.

It is plain why the Pharisee is not received. He asks for nothing. He thinks he is a giver, not a receiver; and therefore the Lord receives him not.

Beside the Pharisee in strange contrast, there stood one whom he despised and neglected.

## II. THE PUBLICAN WHOM THE LORD RECEIVED—VERS. 13-14.

He felt himself so unworthy that he stood afar off. But, says Augustine, "not afar from God, for God is ever nigh to such." With bowed head and heart smitten in unfeigned sorrow, his only plea is, God be merciful to me, the sinner. It is remarkable that the word he uses means literally "be propitiated." It points to an atoning sacrifice, to Him whom God has set to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1 John ii. 2. In Christ alone are there forgiveness and righteousness.

The man has become as a little child. He is willing to be a recipient and nothing else. He has nothing but his sin. And as a sinner he comes to Him who receives such. The Lord not only received him, but emphatically declared his reception and forgiveness. He went down justified.

The Lord again announces the great law of his kingdom. Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased. Of this principle the Scripture history is full of illustrations, —Pharaoh, Goliath, Haman, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod. But he that humbleth himself, he that is self-empty, "poor in spirit," shall be exalted. He that thought he was rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing, went empty away; while the hungry was filled with good things, blessed peace and hope.

But the conditions of acceptance are further illustrated by

## III. THE INFANTS WHOM THE LORD RECEIVED—VERS. 15-17.

There were parents who brought their babes to Jesus. For our babes, as well as these, this is the highest honour, the best blessing we can seek for them—that Jesus may touch them. The disciples were annoyed, perhaps thinking this beneath our Lord's attention. But how differently Jesus thought, and thus he still condescends to receive the humblest and weakest.

Jesus called the children.

Two things are worthy of remark here. No one before Jesus ever noticed the children. It is the Gospel which has ennobled childhood. How different is the condition of children in heathendom and in Christian families.

He called the children, but they could only come as their parents brought them. This unfolds the true meaning of infant baptism.

Our Lord not only receives the children, but says, that of such is His kingdom, and that only when becoming as little children we can enter it.

A little child is peculiarly and emphatically a *recipient*, one who *receives*. It gives nothing; it earns nothing; it can claim nothing. It has to *receive* every thing. There is no "give and take" between an infant and its mother. The giving is all on the mother's side; the taking all on the child's. And so must it be with us and God. Of course, it is so really; but men will not see it; they want to give God something to earn his favour, to claim it as a right. Jesus says, No, you must become as a little child—be willing to receive all as of grace; let there be no "give and take," be a recipient and nothing else. You must not come for the water of life with a cup already half full of ink. Bring an empty vessel, and he will fill it to overflowing. It is the humble *recipient* whom God receives.

"Freely ye have received." These words of Jesus set forth our relation to God. Towards Him we must be from first to last recipients.

"Ask and ye shall receive"—"receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts xvi. 18); "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 38); "receive the spirit of adoption" (Rom. viii. 15); *receive* such "showers of blessing" that there shall not be room enough to *receive* them" (Mal. iii. 10).

"What hast thou that thou didst not *receive*?" Then as ye have freely received, "freely give." That will be like Christ. There is no other way to be like Him. "To as many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," like Himself.

Whom does the Lord receive? He "*receiveth sinners*:" (Luke xv. 2). Let us come to Him and say, "Receive us graciously;" (Hos. xiv. 2). Then all through life we shall be recipients of his bounty; and when we die, our prayer will be, "Lord Jesus, *receive* my spirit." His promise is, I will *receive* you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward *receive* me to glory!"

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. A Pharisee.—The Pharisees were a powerful religious sect, of predominant influence in the Jewish state. They were the recognized teachers, proud of their legal knowledge, and boasting a superior sanctity. They observed the strictest letter of the Mosaic law, and besides held to various traditions (ch. xv. 2), washed themselves religiously before meals, fasted twice a week, on Thursdays and Mondays (see ch. ix. 14, and ch. xxiii. 15, 23), but were hypocritical (ch. xxiii. 14, 17, etc), narrow minded, selfish, bigoted, and vain, fond of pleasures and lax in morals (ch. v. 20; ch. xv. 4, 8; ch. xxiii. 3, 14, 23, 25). And a religion such as theirs was declared by our Lord wholly worthless for admittance to heaven (Matt. v. 20). Their name is from the Hebrew word *pharash*, which means, to *separate*.—*Jacobus*. The Pharisees were men who rested satisfied with the outward. The form of religion, which varies in all ages, that they wanted to stereotype. The inner heart of religion, the unchangeable, justice, mercy, truth—that they could not feel. They could jangle about the breadth of a phylactery. They could discuss, as if it were a matter of life and death, ecclesiastical questions about tithes. They could decide to a furlong the length of journey allowable on the Sabbath day. But they could not look with mercy upon a broken heart, nor suffer a hungry man to rub an ear of corn on the Sabbath, nor cover the shame of a tempted sister or an erring brother. Men without souls, from whose narrow hearts the grandeur of everlasting truth was shut out.—*Robertson*.

2. A publican.—The publicans were tax-gatherers. Judaea was a province of the Roman Empire. The Jews bore this foreign yoke with great impatience, and paid their taxes with great reluctance. It happened, therefore, that those who were appointed to collect taxes were objects of great detes-

tation. They were, besides, men of abandoned characters, oppressive in their exactions, and dissolute in their lives. By the Jews they were associated in character with thieves and adulterers, and those who were profane and dissolute.—*Barnes*. The publican represented those who, although they have sinned greatly, yet feel the burden of their sins, and desire to escape from them.—*Trench*.

3. Stood.—It is a mistake growing out of forgetfulness of Jewish and early Christian customs, when some commentators see in the fact that the Pharisee prayed *standing*, an evidence already manifesting itself of his pride. Even the parable itself contradicts this notion; for the publican, whose prayer was a humble one, stood also. To pray standing was the manner of the Jews (1 Kings viii. 22; 2 Chron. vi. 12; Matt. vi. 5. Mark xi. 25), though in moments of more than ordinary humiliation or emotion of heart, they changed this attitude for one of kneeling or prostration (Deut. vi. 10; 2 Chron. vi. 13; Acts ix. 40).—*Trench*.

4. I fast twice in the week.—He is as perfect in regard to the first table of the law as in the second. The Mosaic economy enjoined but one fast, only one in the whole fifty-two weeks of the year; but this Pharisee fasted twice each week.—*Guthrie*. I give tithes (a tenth) of all I possess. More correctly rendered, *of all I acquire*.—*Alford*. God required His people to tithe the fruits of the olive and vine, and sheaves of the field, and the produce of their flocks; the sacrifice of the Pharisee rose above the requirements of the law. Anise and cummin and other common pot-herbs were all scrupulously tithed. "I have done more than He requires. He is my debtor, rather than I His."—*Guthrie*.

## WORDS OF THE WISE.

HERE is what Mr. Spurgeon said the other day—you can almost hear his clarion voice proclaiming it to his 5,000 assemblage: "Make the bridge from the cradle to manhood just as long as you can. Let your child be a child, and not a little ape of a man running about the town." Good advice.

THE most unhappy of all men is the man who cannot tell what he is going to do, that he has got no work cut out for him in the world, and does not go into any. For work is the grand cure of all the maladies and miseries that ever beset mankind—honest work which you intend getting done.—*Carlyle*.

WE can never secure right religious character without, in the first place, having a spiritual life. There can be no foliage on the tree if it be without sap and the capacity to use nourishment furnished by the soil and atmosphere; nor can there be the real beauty of holiness in a man who has no life-connection with the Saviour. Believe and live and bear fruit—that is the order.

"I do not care what becomes of me," said a girl on the street to a companion. "But I do," said a passer by, full of the compassion of the gospel, and by an effort won the despairing soul to Christ. The love of men prompting the effort for their salvation is a positive Christian Grace. This is never to be dampened or offended by indifference, and we would that the church were full of it.

SPRINGS are little things, but they are sometimes sources of large streams; a helm is a little thing, but it governs the course of a large ship; a word, a look, a frown, all are little things, but powerful for good or evil. Think of this, and mind the little things. Keep your word sacredly; keep it to the children; they will mark it sooner than any body else, and the effect may be as lasting as life.

WE are not far from our father's house; it cannot be long before we pass beyond the spheres; and when we get into the other life, and turn round, and look upon the little hillocks that we called mountains, and upon the splashes of mud that we called sloughs, and upon the briars that we thought were spears, and measure things by infinite standards, how small this life will seem! How insignificant the globe itself will appear! How unworthy of notice we shall regard the daily frets and bickerings of human life? How ashamed we shall be of our past pusillanimity! We shall stand before God and see what the royalty of Christ is, and what is the glory of an inheritance in him. When we look back from the realm above upon our earthly experience, how ashamed we shall be if we prove ourselves unworthy to be the sons of God by sinking down under a little trouble, and by complaining and moaning as if God were dealing very hardly with us.—*Bacher*.

## MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY.

WHITBY.—At Bowmanville, on Tuesday, 3rd December, at 11 o'clock a.m.

PARIS.—The Presbytery of Paris will meet in Chalmers' Church, Woodstock, on Tuesday the 17th December, at 11.30 a.m.

LINDSAY.—At Lindsay, on the last Tuesday of November. LANARK AND RENFREW.—In St. Andrew's Church, Carleton Place, on November 19th, at 1 p.m.

SARGEEN.—In Knox Church, Hamilton, on Tuesday the 17th Dec., at 2 o'clock p.m.

TORONTO.—In the usual place, on the first Tuesday of November, at 11 a.m.

GUELPH.—In Knox Church, Guelph, on the third Tuesday of November, at 10 o'clock a.m.

BARRIE.—Next ordinary meeting at Barrie, Tuesday, 26th November, at 11 a.m.

BRUCE.—In the Presbyterian Church, Port Elgin, on Tuesday, 17th December, at 2 o'clock p.m.

PETERBOROUGH.—In St. Paul's Church, Peterborough, on the third Tuesday of January.

LONDON.—In First Presbyterian Church, London, on the third Tuesday in December at 2 o'clock p.m.

KINGSTON.—In John Street Church, Belleville, on first Tuesday of January, 1879, at 7.30 p.m.

BROCKVILLE.—At Spencerville, on Tuesday, December 17th, at 3 p.m.