

Youths' Department.

Lessons for 1871.

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

SUNDAY, JULY 9TH, 1871.

Earnest Prayer.—Luke xi. 5-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Gen. xxxii. 24-32; Luke xxiii. 1-8.

What request is mentioned in the parable? vs. 6. How came it to be made? vs. 5, 6. What answer was given? vs. 7. What do you think of the answer?

What would change this denial to consent? vs. 8. What is importunity? Wherein is the man who refused to rise like or unlike God in his giving? What is the lesson of the parable? Can you see why three friends, the midnight hour, etc., are mentioned?

Repeat the three commands. vs. 9. The three promises. vs. 9. Do the commands all have just the same meaning? Do the promises? Repeat the 10th vs. Are all prayers answered? Jas. iv. 3. Have all your prayers been answered? Have any of them?

For what are we taught to pray? vs. 13. Are we ever to pray for other blessings? vs. 3; 1 Kings xviii. 42-45; Jas. v. 13-16; Phil. iv. 6. How are we taught for what to pray? Rom. viii. 26. How ready is God to give the Holy Spirit? vs. 11-13. Why then is any one without that Spirit? Does not this gift bring with it all blessing? 1 Cor. iii. 21-23; Rom. viii. 28; Matt. vi. 33. Have you asked God for his Holy Spirit? Do you really, and with whole heart desire Spirit?

SUMMARY.—We are drawn to God by our destitution, and drawn to him by his infinite love.

ANALYSIS.—Earnest Prayer.—I. Man Asking.—1. The parable. vs. 5-8. 2. Direct statement. vs. 9. 10. (1.) Command and promise, each in three forms. (2.) General law, in three forms.

II. God Asking.—1. The human illustration. vs. 11, 12. 2. The divine reality. vs. 13.

EXPOSITION.—The request.—It is for three loaves of bread. These loaves were "round cakes, not unlike flat stones in shape and appearance (vs. 11) about a span in diameter and a finger's breadth in thickness." For a hungry traveller the three would not be too much. The request is every way reasonable. It is for needed food, in an unexpected emergency, of a friend abundantly supplied. That the hour was unseasonable was not the asker's fault, and besides, if he for friendship not only let the traveller into his house, but went out at that midnight hour to borrow for him a supper, was it too much to expect him to whom he applied to rise and lend it on the score of friendship, and that too without grumbling?

The answer.—Not that of generous friendship, but of selfish laziness. His "door is now shut," locked or barred for the night, and he in bed with the little ones. It does cost some effort to get up in such case, we know from experience, and to be disturbed in a midnight slumber does not tend to good nature. This man takes no counsel of neighborly duty, but only of selfish inclination, and in effect says, "Don't trouble me. Go home. Let your friend go without a supper. I cannot and will not get up either for him or for you." Thus he refuses, not as being without bread, or as unwilling to lend or give, but from sheer dislike of rising.

Importunity.—Earnest, urgent, persistent asking, refusing to leave empty-handed. The man has a choice of evils,—the annoyance of the importunity, or the trouble of rising. At length he chooses the latter as the least. Selfishness gives what friendship refused.

Conjectures.—Perhaps this parable was spoken to the seventy and with special reference to their ministry. See x. 17. Christ may have introduced the particulars simply to make the picture natural and true hearers' experience.

A contrast.—In prayer we ask of God. But the man here asked was the opposite of God, both in his general spirit, and in the motives which prompted his giving. So, too, of the unjust judge. Chap. xviii. This shows that a parable must be explained with care, and that to pervert it is easy. God sometimes seems to refuse an answer to our true and urgent request. But it is the opposite in reality, else all prayer to God would be fruitless at least of good.

The lesson.—Two words contain it—importunity, success. These in the parable stand as cause and effect. The first brings the second. We must be importunate, not to tease and worry God into giving, but in

the bold confidence that if we wait on him he will give us his bread. Psalm xxv. 5; xxxvii. 7. To be importunate is not to be impudent. Christian boldness is rooted in Christian humility.

The commands.—They are in form, three; in substance, one. Yet the second is stronger than the first, and the third than the second. The command is thrice given for emphasis. Men feeling needy incline to pray. For such it were much if God had said, "Ye may," but better far, he says, "Ye shall." He not only allows, but requires prayer.

The promises.—These, also, are three in form, one in substance. True prayer shall, shall SHALL be answered; that is it. The promises exactly correspond to the commands. The simple fact of promise is precious. Unbelief is always urging, often parading Job's old question Job xxi. 15, and in every heart lurks, sometimes at least, a whispering infidel. The Christian doubts and is dumb. Can a man move God? Will God really answer? How can he? "Foreknowledge! decrees! laws! Ah, me! no, no, it can't be." "What profit?" Hark! God speaks. "Ye shall, ye shall, ye shall receive! God says that, and God knows.

The Holy Spirit.—Some hearts will secretly ask when they come to these words of the lesson, Only that? something else had been better, something else is more desired. Just this is why, on the one hand, the Spirit is not asked, and on the other, is not given. But man's one real want, his central, chief, eternal want—want at least as need,—is God. So our last lesson taught us. His good is his God, as a babe's good is its mother. And as related to God, we must be babes forever. We never grow up to Godhood, as our babes do to manhood. So evermore, as at the beginning, we must find in him all. To lose God is the sum of all losses. Hence to see what we are, and feel what we need, is to "thirst for God." Psalms xlii. and lxiii. Hence Christ's great promise to his church was that of the Holy Spirit. Explain this. Gal. v. 22; Eph. v. 9; Rom. viii.

Other blessings.—"In everything" we are to make known our requests to God. Phil. iv. 6. Yet there is a difference. We have our natural wants, but it may be best for us and for Christ's cause that they be not gratified. Still, if we "seek first the kingdom of God," our natural wants will not overtop our spiritual want, and every prayer for whatever good, will breathe the holy "Not my will, but thine." Unanswered prayers (Jas. iv. 3) are selfish, not Christ prayers. And remember, prayer is not of the lip, but of the heart, but when the heart moves, the lips may, often must, move likewise.

God's readiness.—He is a father. As surely as a true father will not give his child stones for bread, poisonous serpents for fish, and deadly scorpions for eggs, God will not refuse his children bread. Is not that warrant enough for boldness and importunity? Ye who are evil,—ye, not we, for Christ was sinless; ye love, but "God is love." What a blessed lesson we have to-day. What words are these of Jesus. Never man spake like him. What wonder that Mary "sat at his feet."

ILLUSTRATION.—A mother, who had brought up a large family of children, all of whom had become members of the Christian fold, was asked what means she had used with so much success, to win them to the cross. She replied, "I have always felt that they were not converted before they became seven or eight years of age, they would probably be lost; and when they have approached that age, I have been in an agony lest they should pass it unconverted. I have gone to the Lord in my anguish, and he has not turned away my prayers, nor his mercy from me." Let all mothers and fathers follow this example.

John Knox, wrestling in prayer for his country, cried, "Give me Scotland or I die."

Scripture examples of earnest prayer are: Jacob's "wrestling," David "panting," "thirsting," "pouring out his soul," "crying day and night," "waiting for God"; Bartimeus crying "the more a great deal, Have mercy on me"; Jesus in Gethsemane.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 309, 310.

What we are afraid to do before men, we should be afraid to think before God.

The best thing to give to the poor,—employment.

Minutes.

NOVA SCOTIA CENTRAL ASSOCIATION.

We gave a summary of Saturday's proceedings in our last. We accidentally omitted the names of the officers of the Association. They were as follows:

Moderator, Rev. E. O. Read. Clerk, Rev. S. March. Assistant Clerk, Rev. W. E. Hall. Treasurer, W. C. Bill. Assistant Treasurer, Edwin Rand.

We copy the remainder from the Official Minutes.

Monday Morning Session, June 26th.

The Introductory Sermon was preached by Rev. J. E. Goucher of Halifax, from 1 Thess. iii. 8. Subject:—"The steadfastness of the Church, the evidence and support of a living ministry."

Prayer by Rev. W. G. Parker.

The remaining Letters from churches were read.

The Committee on Circular Letter presented their Report, recommending that the said letter be read. It was accordingly read by the writer, Rev. S. W. DeBlois, A. M.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE NOVA SCOTIA CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,—

We propose on this occasion to present before you some thoughts in relation to the Lord's Supper, an ordinance of the Church of God of no mean importance.

There are four passages in the New Testament which give an account of the origin of this rite. Mat. xxvi. 26-29. Mark xiv. 22-25. Luke xxii. 19-20. 1 Cor. xi. 23-26. By examining these, which agree substantially, we shall get all the information (save from incidental allusions) that is contained in the Word of God. From these we may learn. I. What the ordinance is not. II. What it is. III. What class of persons is entitled to participate therein. IV. The duties enjoined upon those who partake.

I. This ordinance, is not a sacrifice for sin. Christ was once offered and requires not that sacrifices of himself should again and again be made. We need scarcely advert to the absurd and unscriptural notions, by which the Church of Rome, and other Churches, so called, under pretence of exalting the mystery, pervert and destroy the original idea of the institution. The words "This is my body" so plainly figurative, being alleged in support of the theory, that the bread and wine are changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. No one can pretend to misunderstand our Lord, when he says "I am the door," "I am the way," "I am the vine."

The Communion is not a way or method of salvation.—Those who are anxious about their souls, are frequently encouraged to come to the Lord's table. It is hoped that the vivid representation there made, of the sufferings of Christ, and the solemnity and deep feeling,—developed by the whole ceremony, will have a tendency to draw such persons to Christ, and give them peace in believing. However plausible such a view may seem, it has no authority, either by precept or example, from the Word of God. The custom arises from a mistaken view of the ordinance, and it may be also, from an erroneous idea of the condition of mind of those, who profess to be seeking salvation.

We might advert to other theories, which have been held, and put forth on this subject, but time would fail us. We pass on to consider

II. What this rite is.

1. It is an ordinance of Divine appointment. This do. It was instituted by Him to whom all power is given, in heaven and on earth. It was instituted in a marked, impressive and binding manner. Thus it bears all the sanction and weight of a Divine command. With everything adapted to give force to the command, touching pathos and solemnity to the occasion, we should keep the feast, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

2. Again, This is a Commemorative Rite. It commemorates to the world a great transaction. Leslie, in his "Short method with a Deist," makes use of this fact, as a powerful evidence of christianity. Here is a succession. No observance of the church is more distinctly and more clearly traced to the very words of Jesus, than this. Positive ordinances may have some disadvantages, in that they may be misinterpreted or perverted, but they have this benefit, that they are a standing memorial from generation to generation, that certain events took place.

Men die. Faiths change. But just so long as ordinances are observed, we have a clue by which to trace their original design.

Almost every sect which professes to be christian, celebrates this observance. The Roman Catholics it is true, have mutilated it by depriving the laity of the cup, have perverted it by exalting it in the place of Christ. The Friends or Quakers have abolished it altogether; but all others concur in commemorating to the world, the great events it is intended to betoken.

It commemorates to the church her great Head. "Do this in remembrance of me." "Ye do shew forth the Lord's death." It commemorates to the individual who receives it, a wonderful transaction in which he himself has participated. It brings before his mind, certain truths adapted both to humble, and to make him joyful. His own christian experience is involved in the celebration. He remembers the time when he came first to Jesus; when the words of love and mercy entered his heart, filling his soul with gladness and joy. The ordinance becomes indeed to him a eucharist, a glowing offering of thanksgiving and praise. "What shall I render unto the Lord for his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." I will pay my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in trouble.

3. And this brings us to consider, thirdly that the Supper is a symbolic rite. Under the former dispensation, the method of teaching by symbols was very freely used. Thus the Mercy Seat, the Holy of Holies, the Sacrifices, were emblems. They were very fitting in what may be termed the childhood of the human race. The picture or form of a thing, is well adapted to aid the memory and judgement of a child. But when the mind has become matured, these to a

great extent can be dispensed with. When I became a man I put away childish things. Thus in the epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle speaks of the law, as poor, weak and rudimentary, but still adapted to the time and purpose, for which it was designed.

In the kingdom of Christ this teaching is almost entirely put aside. The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, but having accepted Christ we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

In the two positive ordinances of the christian church however, and only in these it appears to have been beneficially retained.

The one, that of Baptism, symbolises the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord, and the believer's spiritual resurrection with Him, Rom. vi. 4; the washing away of sin, see the same passage, also Acts ii. 38, and xxii. 16.

The other teaches—

1. The sufferings of Christ on the cross. This is my body which is broken for you, thus recalling to mind the passage in Isaiah liii. 5. So the wine poured out indicates the blood shed on the cross for us, and points to the truth, that without shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sin. Thus viewed it bears a close analogy to the Passover. That was instituted in memory of a great event in Jewish history, a great deliverance accomplished. As often as the children of Israel partook thereof, they were reminded of the destroying angel, of the blood-sprinkled door posts, of the wailing cry in Egypt, of the paschal lamb slain, roasted and eaten in hot haste, their loins girded, shoes on their feet, staves in their hands. These were facts, emblematic of God's mighty power, of their own helplessness, and of the wondrous deliverance effected.

The Lord's Supper teaches us, of our guilt and danger, our helplessness and ruin; of God's infinite love; of Christ's divine compassion; of His awful sufferings, and of our deliverance from the thralldom of death and hell.

Not only so, there is also a subjective meaning attached to the observance of this rite. Take the 6th chapter of John's Gospel, and read ten verses from the 48th to the 58th. This was the hard saying which some of his disciples could not bear, and walked no more with him.

Food may be so prepared as to gratify the eye, but merely to gaze upon it, will do us no physical good. It must be taken into the mouth, eaten up and digested. If it be wholesome, it makes blood, and is distributed throughout the body, performing its functions, and quickening the whole man into active vigorous life. So the doctrines of the gospel, may be looked at as statements, and even pondered, but they do no good, unless they are taken into the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. Then they produce spiritual life.—Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood ye have no life in you. The Redeemer nourishes our spiritual life as food nourishes the natural life, and we realize the force of the expression, "We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." Conversion involves a personal reception of Christ for ourselves, into our hearts.

III. Let us consider in the third place, the class of persons entitled to partake of this rite.

1. It is very evident that the careless, the worldly, and the profane, have no claim to be admitted to the privilege. 2. Neither, as we have already shown, are we authorized to invite those who are seeking salvation, who have never wholly given themselves to Christ, and have no sense of pardon or acceptance.

3. Those who first partook were disciples of the Lord. "Drink ye all of it." Whom is he here addressing? Evidently those who professed to believe. Though there was a Judas among them, he avowed as much attachment to Christ, as the others. To whom did the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, give directions about its due observance? "Unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints."

4. It is evident from this that they were not only regenerate but baptized. The Apostle says again. When ye are come together in the Church. 1 Cor. xi. 18. See also John iv. 1, Acts ii. 41, 42. The Supper is then an ordinance of the church, to be held in the church and nowhere else. The church also, has authority to decide, who may and who may not partake, and the church alone.

In these views, we agree substantially with our Presbyterian and Congregational brethren, though we differ from our Episcopal and Wesleyan brethren on some points.

This statement will perhaps surprise some persons. We have been taunted so frequently with the exclusiveness of our close communion sentiments, as they are termed, that persons are very apt to suppose us bigotted in the extreme, when the reverse is the case. We set up no barriers which others do not set up. We are in fact less exclusive than some others. Were we disposed to retort, we might truly say, that they effectually exclude a large and ever increasing number of their brethren and sisters, from the Lord's table. They making that baptism which is nowhere commanded, and thus place the matter in such a light, as to make it impossible for us, without a manifest violation of our principles, to commune with them. Although there are open Communion Baptists, many in England, and a few on this continent, their position is anomalous, and the mode of argument, by which they attempt to justify that position, is such, that, if carried to its logical results, it would nullify the ordinance of baptism altogether.

IV. Finally. The question arises, What are the duties enjoined upon those who partake?

1. Self examination. But let a man examine himself, 1 Cor. xi. 28. There is danger, even of the christian eating and drinking unworthily. Many temporal judgements seem to have come upon the Church at Corinth, on this account. Many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept. Test your motives. Try your hearts. See whether you be sincere in your profession, steadfast in your attachment to Christ. If the result of such examination be unfavorable, let that drive you, not away from the table, but to confession and to prayer. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2. Again. If thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, go be reconciled to thy brother. Confess your faults against one another, one to another.

3. Remember Christ, especially in His own ordinances. Cultivate a spirit receptive of His teaching. Endeavour to apprehend that for which you also are apprehended of Christ.

Let your heart go out in love toward the body of Christ,