

Back

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The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL G. E. S. O. N.

Fourth Quarter Lesson 11 Dec. 16, 1900

ZACCHEUS, THE PUBLICAN.—Luke 19: 1-10

Commit. Verses 8-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.—Luke 19: 10

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The last of March, A. D. 30.

Place.—At Jericho.

ZACCHEUS, THE SKEKER.—Vs. 1.

5. And Jesus entered and passed through (was passing) Jericho. It was a thriving city. The city derived its wealth chiefly from the great commerce from the east side of Jordan, Maab, Gil-ad, Bashan, and Arabia, all of which, to reach Jerusalem and the coast, had to pass through Jericho. Through the custom house at Jericho all this trade passed. The officials had opportunity of accumulating wealth. There was a man named Zaccheus, He was a Jew. Which was the chief (rather a chief) among the publicans, or gatherers of revenue for the Romans. The taxes imposed by the Romans on subject nations were farmed out to men of wealth, who, for a specified sum paid into the Roman treasury obtained the right of collecting the taxes of a province or city. These contractors entrusted the collection of taxes to sub-contractors or tax gatherers. This system gave the widest scope for rapacity and extortion. It is probable that Zaccheus was the sub-contractor at Jericho. And he was rich. He had every opportunity to amass wealth.

A Character Study of Zaccheus. He was rich, and so far as that goes had been successful.

He was possessed of some authority and honor.

He was a Jew, and had had religious instruction, and had a knowledge of better things than the life he was living.

His conscience was not at ease. His riches had not brought him the comfort and satisfaction he had expected.

As a publican he was a religious outcast. He was despised by the good, and hated by the patriotic.

He had heard about Jesus, and of his eating with publicans and sinners.

ZACCHEUS SEEKING TO KNOW MORE OF JESUS.—N. 3. And he sought to see Jesus. "Kept seeking."

His Motives. Probably curiosity had something to do with it.

He had longings after a better life.

What he had heard of Jesus kindled a hope within him that the chains which bound him might be broken.

His Triumph over Hindrances.—Vs. 3, 4. And could not for the press (crowd) who were thronging Jesus. They were going up to the Passover, at which feast sometimes two million people were gathered. Because he was little of stature, and could not see over the heads of the multitude. And he ran before the multitude. It is an entirely different tree from our sycamore, which is the name of the sycamore maple in England, and of the buttonwood tree in America. It grows to a large size, sometimes a circumference of fifty feet, and is evergreen. It is not a tall, but a wide-spreading tree. No tree that grows could be more easy for a short man to climb.

Practical. 1. The finding that way is one of the surest proofs of sincere earnestness.

2. Every man knows of places when he can put himself in the way of Christ,—as the house of God, the praying circles, the closet for secret prayer.

You must climb over the crowd of difficulties which stand between your soul and Christ.

4 "Often by reason of the crowd of worldly affairs and our low spiritual stature, we cannot see Christ. But there are sycamores in the road by which he will pass. He has given us the means of grace,—Scripture, prayer, ordinances.

Why Hindrances are allowed. (1) To test and prove a man's sincerity; (2) to increase his faith and earnestness; (3) to sift out hypocrites from the roll of Christ's followers; (4) to make clear to the man himself, when he begins to follow Jesus, that he has really changed, and is on the Lord's side.

ZACCHEUS FINDS HIS SAVIOUR.—Vs. 5, 7. The action of Zaccheus was really a prayer, which Jesus answered in his own way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him. He knew both his name and his heart's desire. Zaccheus made haste and came down. Word's of extraordinary grace, for, while the Lord accepted many invitations yet we do not read that he honored any but this publican by offering himself to share

his hospitality. For to day I must

The must of love. It is part of Jesus' plan of work. Abide at thy house. Possibly over night; but more likely it was to be a midday repast, and that in the afternoon our Lord passed to the neighborhood of Bethany.

And he made haste. If Zaccheus had not been alert, he would have filed off his only opportunity.

And when they saw it, they all murmured. The crowd of Jews. The action of Christ was improper, and it required courage to brave the natural feeling. That he was going to be guest. A friendly visit, as with a equal. With a man that is a sinner. A disreputable sinner. Zaccheus, as a publican, would thus be termed, whatever his character had been.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. 1. Jesus welcomes all sinners who look to him and are willing to leave their sins.

2. It is blessed for us when Jesus comes into our homes and abides there. He promises to abide with all those who love him.

CONFESSION, CONSECRATION, RESTORATION, SALVATION.—Vs. 8-10. And Zaccheus stood. Stood up before his family, and what-er guests were present. He would confess his intention to live a new life. Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. Not, it is my practice to give. Zaccheus' statement is not a vindication, but a vow. "I now give up by way of restoration."

And (he will be just as well as generous) if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation. I restore him fourfold. Not a declaration of his past habit, but the expression of a new purpose. Restoration is even a surer sign than abstinence of a regenerate heart and a Christian life. His act was the overflow of a penitence heart.

This day is salvation come to this house. The publican was saved; saved from his past sins, saved to a new, true, holy life. Forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. The expression was probably used with a reference to the sneers of Pharisees against publicans and sinners. Our Lord declares that however much the self-righteous Pharisee might despise Zaccheus, he was a genuine son of Abraham, if any one was. He was one by natural descent. But better than that, he was a son of Abraham because he walked in the steps of Abraham's faith and work. He was one in heart with Abraham as well as in blood.

For the Son of man is come to seek, Zaccheus was seeking the Lord and the Lord was seeking Zaccheus. And to save that which was lost. And therefore he went where the lost were.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS. 1. Conversion may be sudden, as in the cases of Zaccheus and Paul. When one is going the wrong way the sooner he stops and turns round the better.

The proofs of conversion are repentance, confession, restitution, and benevolence. The reason why many a professed seeker finds no light or peace is the lack of willingness to confess and make good the wrong practised.

No religious profession amounts to anything if it does not include a readiness to put one's property at the service of the Lord. It has been well said that "a personal consecration" should be spelled "a purse and all-consecration."

In all probability, with the Lord's express sanction, he continued in his occupation, in order that he might set an example to others of his class and that he might restrain the one over whom he was chief from extortion and other crimes. Zaccheus did that which was harder than to give up his business. For the honest example would shine with approving lights upon those who wished to do their business dishonestly, and they would hate, and injure, and slander him.

The power of the realized presence of Christ over a soul is very great.

What's the Use!

What's the use of going to Sabbath school any longer, Will? I am about tired of it and think we are old enough to quit it altogether.

Robert Dupus, you surprise me. I can scarcely believe you could utter such remarks.

Well, what's the use? We all know the commandments by heart, and can read our Bibles just as well at home as there. I confess I am completely tired of this constant restraint. If I am absent for a single Sabbath, it is, Robert, I missed you from the class, or, Robert, were you ill last Sabbath? I'm too old to be tied to anyone's apron string, and I won't bear it.

How old are you?

Robert blushed. Fifteen, yesterday, and I've been a Sabbath school scholar all my life.

I am glad to hear you say that, but am sorry you do not realize how important it is to remain there. There is an old saying, so true that it will stand forever, Satan finds mischief still for idle hands to do.

Just as sure as you break away from the influence of the Sabbath school, just that sure will you wander from the straight and narrow path into some folly and sin.

Held there, Will, you are taking too much upon yourself in making such an assertion.

I am older than you, Robert, and know whereof I speak. Of the great criminals in our land to day how few of them have ever been trained in early life in Sabbath schools. Of the hundreds and thousands of drunkards, comparatively few of them have known the influence of Christian training. Of five hundred convicts recently examined in our prisons, but three of them had ever been Sunday school scholars. My dear friend, do not despise this training, for by preventive influence these schools are doing more for the social and civil order of our country than all the statute books and dungeons of our land.

You talk as if you thought I would become a common criminal unless I stayed in the Sabbath school. I don't propose to do any harm by keeping away.

Yet if you do anything worse than withdraw your influence from the right and take a stand for the world, who can measure the harm which even such action can do. The Sabbath was hallowed from the beginning for holy purposes, and it is desecrated by us. Ah, Robert, you may speak lightly now of this training influence, but of all the institutions in the land there is none more helpful to the youthful mind.

You don't propose to keep me in Sabbath school all my life, do you, Will?

Why not? Since it opens before us such vast fields of usefulness and promises such rich rewards. Indeed, I never expect to outlive my love for the work and hope to grow old in the service, if God spares my life so long.

Robert's face blushed and he laughed in his easy, good-natured way.

After all, he said, I suppose my time cannot be better employed than in studying the Bible and I will follow your example, if you will promise me not to lecture any more on the subject.

Will blushed, too, but there was a ring of joy in his tones.

Lecturing does not fit easily on me, he answered. I was never an adept along this line; but, Robert, I warrant in the years to come, when you look back upon the past, you will not regret the decision you have reached to-day. There are many studies beneficial to the mind, but the study of God's word exceeds them all.—Christian Intelligencer.

Robert Burdette Talks to the Bicycle Boy.

And so, my boy, you were too tired, after a week of hard work, to go to church Sunday morning, and mounted your wheel and went on a century run for a rest? And got home 7 p. m. so dazed tired that you couldn't go to church in the evening? And, defending your way of spending the day, you quote the words of the Saviour, The Sabbath was made for man.

So it was my son; so it was. So was the buzz-saw. And not two years ago I say a man with every one of his fingers and a part of his thumb gone from his right hand, just because he made wrong use of buzz saw. The buzz-saw was in its place, doing good work for man, to which end it was made. It was fulfilling its destiny. It was doing the thing to which it was appointed. It didn't move out of its place a hair's breadth to do the man harm. It just kept on sawing wood and the man couldn't—or rather didn't—wait until the buzz-saw was through its work. He transgressed it (transgressus—trans, across; gradi, step—to step across); he reached over it, when he should have gone around it. And when he drew back his hand, which he did immediately, he didn't have the thing he reached for, and he didn't have the fingers he reached with. He had not only gained something, but he had lost something. And, more than that, he had lost something he will never get back again in this world.

Ah, my boy, I don't want to shut you up in a dingy boarding house, a hot room, the dusty city and the smelly, dirty streets all the time. But when you go into God's country, for God's fresh air, and rest of body and peace of mind, don't run over God's Sunday to get these things. He has them for you; no one else can give them to you. But you don't want to trample on some of his greatest blessings to get the higher ones. I have no more objection to your riding to church than you have to walking on Sunday. If I could ride as well as you do, I shouldn't walk, unless I preferred it, which I certainly do. But you didn't ride to church. You passed the doors of three or four nice country churches on your spin,

and never so much as paused at one of them. You didn't go out for fresh air and rest and peace of mind. You went out because you were too lazy to go to church or too selfish or too mean or just because you didn't want to. And the meanest thing in the whole business is that, after running away from church, after denying God the reverence and love and worship of his own day, which is his due, after running over the Bible, you try to sneak a passage out of it to justify your treachery. Ah, my boy, not half a dozen verses away from the one you quoted you will find what use the Lord of the Sabbath made of it for man. Do you use the day for man as he did, and you may write that text across your heart, and have it graven on the handle bars of your wheel, and ride a thousand miles every Sunday if you can, and God and man will bless you for it. But don't go racing and chasing over the whole country side all Sunday, having a jolly good time all by yourself and all for yourself, and then come back quoting Scripture to prove that you were on a missionary tour all the time.

The Sabbath was made for man; indeed it was, and so were Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. And it does seem to me that as God made all of them, he ought to have a goodly portion of at least one of them. The Sabbath was made for man. So was corn, but not to make into whiskey. So was the sea, but not for piracy. The Sabbath and corn and the sea were made for man, not for the devil. Remember that, my boy.—Ex.

Three Boys.

"Let me tell you," said Frances Willard once in the Young Crusader, "about three splendid boys I knew once on a time. Their father died, and their dear mother was left to bring them up and to earn money with which to do it. So the boys set in to help her. By taking a few boarders, doing the work herself, and practicing strict economy, this blessed woman kept out of debt and gave each of her sons a thorough college education. But if they hadn't worked like havers to help her she never could have done it. Her eldest boy, only fourteen, treated his mother as if she were the girl he loved best. He took the heavy jobs of housework off her hands, put on his big apron, and went to work with a will washed the potatoes, pounded the clothes, ground the coffee, waited on the table—did everything that he could coax her to let him do; and the two younger ones followed his example right along. Those boys never wasted their mother's money on tobacco, beer, or cards. They kept at work, and found any amount of pleasure in it. They were happy jolly boys, too, full of fun, and everybody not only liked but respected them. All the girls in town praised them; and I don't know any better fortune for a boy than to be praised by good girls, nor anything that boys like better. They all married noble and true women, and to-day one of these boys is the president of a college, goes to Europe every year, almost, and is in demand for every good word and work; another lives in one of the most elegant houses in E. Boston, and is my own beloved physician, while the third is a well-to-do wholesale grocer in Paebin, and a member of the city council.

The Boy Understood.

An old schoolmaster said one day to a minister who had come to examine his school, I believe the children know the Catechism word for word. But do they understand it—that is the question? said the minister. The schoolmaster merely bowed respectfully in reply, and the examination began. A little boy had repeated the fifth commandment, Honor thy father and thy mother, and he was requested to explain it.

Instead of trying to do so, he said, almost in a whisper, his face covered with blushes. Yesterday I showed some strange gentlemen over the hill. The sharp stones out my feet, and the gentleman saw they were bleeding, and they gave me some money to buy me shoes. I gave the money to my mother, for she had no shoes either, and I thought I could go barefoot better than she could.—Selected.

Mr. Thomas Ballard, Syracuse, N. Y., writes: "I have been afflicted for nearly a year with that most-to-be dreaded disease Dyspepsia, and at times worn out with pain and want of sleep, and after trying almost everything recommended, I tried one box of Paralee's Vegetable Pills. I am now nearly well, and believe they will cure me. I would not be without them for any money."

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