

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter Lesson 7. Aug. 12, 1900

THE FORGIVING SPIRIT.

Matthew 18: 21-35

Read Matthew 18: 12-35.

Commit Verses 21, 22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.—Matt. 6: 12.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Autumn of A. D. 29 After the Feast of the Tabernacles, which that year occurred October 11. Others place it just before that feast.

Place.—Capernaum, near the Sea of Galilee, in the house where our Lord made his home.

Jesus nearly 33 years old; five months before his crucifixion.

THE LAW OF FORGIVENESS.—Vs. 21, 22. Then came Peter to him in our last lesson we studied concerning offenses against others, the actions that tempted them to sin. These would often take the form of doing some injury to them. Jesus, therefore, gives instructions as to what to do toward those who trespass against us. The rabbis required an offender to go to the injured party, and obtain forgiveness by owning his fault; but Jesus told them that among his disciples the person wronged was to go to the wrong-doer, that such humility and love might win the guilty one to contrition. This was a hard saying, but by prayer this spirit could be obtained. Peter naturally asks how long must one carry out this instruction toward those who keep on sinning and apparently repenting. The rabbis said forgiveness was to be exercised three times. Peter said, How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? How long should he continue to apply the same remedy that failed again and again? Till seven times? Is seven times sufficient? To do that seemed a great stretch of virtue. But he did not get hold of the principles of forgiveness. I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. This is a symbolical expression for never-ending forgiveness. Love is not to be limited by the multiplication table.

THE LAW OF FORGIVENESS INTERPRETED AND APPLIED. The occasions requiring forgiveness are many, and come to all. There are enemies who injure us by word and deed. There are others who say evil things about us carelessly. Even friends sometimes do annoying and trying things.

What the law of forgiveness requires may be best learned from the way God forgives sins.

1. We must have a forgiving heart, never the spirit of hate, or revenge, or retaliation. Never brood over wrong; make all possible allowances and excuses. An old Spanish writer says, 'To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; but to return good for evil is Godlike.'

2. The forgiving spirit seeks to do all the good possible to the one who has wronged us. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and did everything possible to save the city from its fate, even when it was about to crucify him. Twice repeated is the command, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him," etc.

3. The object and aim of forgiveness is the deliverance of ourselves and others from sin. The forgiving spirit does this (1) by keeping evil from our own hearts (revenge, hate, anger), and giving us the victory over ourselves; (2) by influencing others to repent and forsake their sin. Hate inflames hate, but love kindles love.

4. Punishment of the incorrigible is not inconsistent with forgiving love. If the wild beast will not become tame, love says that it must be chained. If men will not repent, then for the safety of the world they must be punished. Parallel with forgiveness there must be faithfulness. There is no virtue in permitting a man to wrong you as often as he choose, forgiving him and doing nothing more.

5. But if the sinner repents then the forgiveness is full and free. It harbors no grudge. The debt is blotted out. The enemy becomes a friend. The wanderer is restored to the family, as if he had never sinned. You do not proclaim the sin from the housetops. Draw the curtain of night upon injuries, and let them be as though they had not been.

THE LAW OF FORGIVENESS ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED BY A PARABLE.—The King and the Debtor.—Vs. 23-27. A certain king, which would take account of. Better as R. V., "make a reckoning with" his servants, his officers. The picture is drawn from an Oriental court. The provincial governors, farmers of taxes, and other high officials are summoned before a despotic sovereign to give an account of their administration. One was brought unto him.

Unwillingly. Which owed him ten thousand talents. A talent was a weight, not a coin. Hence a talent of gold would naturally be worth about sixteen times as much as a talent of silver. According to The Illustrated Bible Treasury (Nelson's), and the Oxford Helps, a Hebrew silver talent was worth 3,000 shekels, or 12,000 denarii (the pence of v. 28). The 10,000 talents would, therefore, be worth \$19,000,000 or \$20,000,000, a sum impossible to pay. A Greek talent would be about half as much. Commanded him to be sold... and all that he had. So in Syria now when the debt grows till it equals in value the entire property of the debtors, the creditor seizes all they possess. And they work for him as his serfs and slaves. And such property he can sell, the men, their wives, and children passing practically as chattels. Worshipped him. Prostrated himself before him. Loosed him (re-loosed him), and forgave him the debt. There was no other way of deliverance.

The king, of course, represents God himself.

The servants are all to whom God has committed great blessings and opportunities, and high trust,—as the gospel, the Word of God, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, a clear sense of duty, a conscience, the Holy Spirit, talents, wealth, influence, everything by which they can serve God, help men, and grow into holy character.

The reckoning is not merely the last judgment, but every time when God brings to man's heart a consciousness of his sin.

The Debt of Sin. The impenitent debt of this guilty sinner represents the magnitude of the debt which the sinner owes to God, and the hopelessness of ever paying it. Its consequences are immeasurable.

The Great Debtor and the Small Debtor.—Vs. 28-30. The same servant went out. From the king's presence. And found one of his fellow-servants. An inferior officer. Owed him an hundred pence. A hundred pence was worth \$16 or \$17, about one millionth part of the debt the unmerciful servant had owed the king. Took him by the throat. This brutal cut-throat was Roman and not Jewish, but has its counterpart in Syria to-day. Fell down at his feet.... I will pay thee all. The very act and words he himself had so lately employed to his creditor. And this fellow-servant could pay in time, for it was only about three months' wages that he owed. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison. When the threshing season comes round, if debtors be unwilling or unable to pay, they are handcuffed and driven like cattle to prison, whence they shall not depart till they have paid the uttermost farthing.

Applications. 1. The man who is most sinful toward God is apt to be the hardest in dealing with those who sin against himself.

2. The sins which others commit against us are very small and few compared with those we commit against God.

The King and the Two Debtors.—Vs. 31-34. His fellow-servants. The scene changes again. The other servants felt great pity for the unfortunate man, and told unto their lord, who they were sure would listen, since he had been so compassionate toward the first debtor. O thou wicked servant. Hard-hearted, ungrateful, selfish. And his lord was wroth. Angry, indignant at such misconduct. Delivered him to his tormentors. Not simply "jailors," but those who sought by legal tortures to find out whether the debtor had any concealed hoard.

The Application. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if ye forgive not your hearts. Not merely in form and in words, but from sincere love with true forgiveness (1) Forgiveness only injured the man, and confirmed him in sin. Therefore love to him must express itself in punishment as the only way to touch his heart and save him from his sin. (2) God's anger is not passion, but a righteous indignation against sin. A good God must loathe and abhor every form of sin. (3) The forgiveness of the first debtor was a test whether he was fitted to receive forgiveness. He failed in the test. The only way we can know that we are forgiven by God is by the heart that forgives. So in the Lord's prayer, we can only ask to be forgiven as we forgive.

The Boy: How to Get Him, How to Keep Him.

How to GET HIM. The first step in securing the boy is to remember that you were once a boy yourself, that you loved a joke and a trick, and, in fact, that you enjoy them at the present time. Let the boys see that you take a personal interest in them. Win them by kindness; never scold. Make them feel the success of whatever you undertake needs their help. Give them something to do, see that they do it, and when it is done be ready to say a kind word, and let them feel that

they have helped you. Enter into their sport; show them that you enjoy it as much as much as they do. In all your talks with them, be sure to make Christ very real. When they want a story, nothing will please them so much as a Bible story well told. It will last, and they will want to hear it again. Never force any religious work on them; always call for volunteers. Do not expect them to succeed at the start. Many a boy has been driven away by a prosy, soulless meeting; put yourself in it and lead them up to the work; they will soon begin to help you carry the load. Remember those who are absent; always send for them. Know where they are; let them know they are missed. Visit them, take them to your home; be very careful to look after the sick and those who may seem to be poor, or those whose parents are not able to do as much for them as some of the others. This will weave a golden cord of sympathy that will bind you to them and will not easily be broken. How to KEEP HIM.—Now that you have him, what shall you do to keep him? This is a serious and an important problem. We can interest boys for a certain time, but after a while things may seem to become monotonous, and you in a measure will be tired. This comes from the fact that you have exhausted your resources in trying to do too much at the start. You must be inventive, find out the things that the boys like best, and then try and develop along that line. Three-fourths of the work is accomplished when you have secured the appreciation of the boys. This done, you can use them as helpers in your work. Arrange the work in such a manner that every boy in your organization will have something to do. Employment makes friends. The different materials used in the construction of a building are worthless when they stand by themselves, but when each part occupies its own place, we have the building in its beauty and simplicity. So with the work among the boys. When you have them all employed, your organization will be erecting a structure of Christian manliness that will be the admiration of all. Unless you are willing to make great sacrifices, your work among the boys will prosper for a time only. You should begin the work with one intense desire to win the boys for Christ. We can say, from a long experience in this work among the boys and girls, that nothing holds them and keeps them together like an organization that has for its object moral and religious training. Let "Christ for the boys and the boys for Christ" be your motto, and trusting in Him for strength, you will see the work prosper in your hands.—C. E. World.

Father's Penholder.

A literary man who was compelled by circumstance to use his family sitting room as a study, missed his penholder one evening while absorbed in writing a story. He looked over his desk, through the pigeon hole, and in the drawers, but it was nowhere in sight. It was not on the floor. He felt behind his ear. It was not there. This is what comes, he said impatiently, of trying to work where there is a houseful of children. Which one of you has taken my pen? The children looked at each other and laughed. He became irritated. "I don't want any foolishness!" he exclaimed. "Where's that pen? Who has taken it?" After a moment's pause one of the children said slyly: "If you will laugh, papa, you will find it." He stared at her in astonishment. Then as her meaning slowly broke in upon him, he joined in the laugh, and the penholder fell out of his mouth, where it had been all the time. How many of the little difficulties of this life one can extricate one's self from by a laugh.—[Youth's Companion.

Rainy Sundays.

Frances Ridley Havergal's admirers, whose name is legion, will read with interest the following lines from her pen: I attend church on rainy Sundays because: 1. God has blessed the Lord's day and hallowed it, making no exceptions for rainy Sundays. 2. I expect my minister to be there. I should be surprised if he were to stay at home for the weather. 3. If his hands fall through weakness I shall have great reason to blame myself unless I sustain him by my prayer and presence. 4. By staying away I may lose the prayers which may bring God's blessing, and the sermon that would have done me great good. 5. My presence is more needful on Sundays when there are few than

on these days when the church is crowded. 6. Whatever station I hold in the church, my example must influence others. If I stay away, why may not they?

Bite Bigger, Billy.

One day a gentleman saw two boys going along the streets of a large city. They were barefooted. Their clothes were ragged and dirty, and tied together by pieces of string. One of the boys was perfectly happy over a half-withered bunch of flowers, which he had just picked up in the street. I say, Billy, said he to his companion, wasn't somebody real good to drop these flowers just where I could find 'em and they're so pretty and sweet? Look sharp, Billy; maybe you'd find something by and by.

Presently the gentleman heard his merry voice again, saying: O Billy, if there ain't half a pair, and it ain't much dirty neither! Cause you haven't found anything you may bite first.

Billy was just going to take a very little taste of it, when his companion said: Bite bigger, Billy! Maybe we'll find another fore long.

What a noble heart that poor boy had, in spite of his rags and dirt.

Good Things to Learn.

Learn to laugh. A good laugh is better than medicine. Learn how to tell a story. A well-told story is as welcome as a sunbeam in a sick-room. Learn to stop croaking. The world is too busy to care for your ills and sorrows. Learn to stop croaking. If you cannot see any good in this world keep the bad to yourself. Learn to hide your aches and pains under a pleasant smile. No one cares whether you have the ear-ache, headache or rheumatism. Learn to attend to your own business—a very important point. Learn to greet your friends with a smile. They carry to many frowns in their heart to be bothered with any of yours.—Eworth Herald.

DISRESPECT TO PARENTS.—Who has not heard children speak of their father as the old man, and of their mother as the old woman? Is there any manifestation of reverence in such language? Some speak of their father as the governor. We do not doubt that some use such terms who do not wish to be irreverent or disrespectful toward their parents. They have simply fallen into an ugly habit of following the example of others. These of whom what we have just said is true are not beyond the reach of wholesome admonition. They will put forth efforts to rid themselves of the unseemly habit when their attention is called to it in the proper way. Next to God, we are to honor no one more than our mother. This honoring will show itself in our words as well as in our deeds. We should, therefore, scrupulously avoid everything that savors of levity when we speak of our parents. Honor thy father and thy mother. This is first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth.—Lutheran Standard.

It was said of one that as he prayed he spoke as if God were near, and talked with him so really and so confidently that those who were beside him found themselves almost looking around to see where God was.—Taylor.

You can help your fellow-men; you must help them. But the only way you can help them is by being the best and noblest person that it is possible for you to be.—Phillips Brooks.

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