

The Sunday-School.

FIRST QUARTER, LESSON VII.—Feb. 14.

JESUS FORGIVES SIN.

Mark 2: 1-12.

THE LESSON includes the three parallels, Matt. 9: 1-8; Mark 2: 1-12; Luke 5: 17-26, together with a glance at the preaching tour throughout Galilee (Mark 1: 35-45).

GOLDEN TEXT.—*The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.* Mark 2: 10.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.* Summer A. D. 28. A few weeks after the last lesson.

Place.—The city of Capernaum. *Place in the Life of Christ.*—At the close of his first tour of Galilee. About the middle of the second year of his public ministry.

Jesus between 31 and 32 years old. John the Baptist in prison in the Castle Machærus since the previous March.

Early next morning, after the busy Sabbath described in last lesson, Jesus went alone into a desert place for prayer and communion with God. Later he was sought by the four disciples, and then by the throngs, who wanted him to return to the city. But instead he made a tour of Galilee, preaching the gospel from town to town, "and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people" (Matthew). After a time he returned to Capernaum where the incident of today's lesson took place.

THE GOSPEL PROCLAIMED TO SINFUL MEN.—Vs. 1-2.—*Again he entered into Capernaum.* The capital point of his work. *After some days.* Some days after the healing of the leper (Mark 1: 40-45). *It was noised that he was in the house.* Perhaps, either at Peter's house or that occupied by his mother and brethren. *Many were gathered together.* Thronging the house. Among them were leading Pharisees and learned men from all parts of Galilee and as far away as Judea and Jerusalem. *And he preached and was speaking when the paralytic was brought to the house.* The word, the good news of salvation. *Crowds and the Preacher.* Crowds are no proof of success in preaching; real success depends on what is done for the crowds. And yet true preaching tends to draw crowds. There is nothing which so attracts as the pure gospel so preached as to meet the needs of the soul.

The Oriental House.—An ordinary Oriental house was usually of one story, with a flat roof and outside stairs to the roof, for during the heat of the summer the family always sleep there. If the house was of the better class, it was built around an open court, with rooms on three sides opening into the court.

THE SINNER SEEKING SALVATION.—V. 3. While Jesus was preaching they come unto him, bringing on a light wooden frame or stretcher. *One sick of the palsy.* A disease which deprives the part affected of sensation or the power of motion, or both. *Borne of four.* One at each corner of the stretcher.

Applications.—1. The palsy is a physical illustration of some forms of sin. Sometimes it takes away or dulls the sense of feeling. It sometimes weakens

the will. Sometimes sin, like what in those days came under the name of palsy produces a fixed condition of evil with intense tortures of conscience.

2. The paralytic needed help which only God could give him.

3. But others can help the sick to health and the sinner to Jesus. These four friends showed skill in bringing the paralytic to Jesus. When they could not bring their friend to Jesus in the ordinary way, they found an extraordinary way. These four men teach us to be inventive, energetic and persevering, in bringing men to Christ.

EARNEST EFFORTS TO BE SAVED. OBSTACLES OVERCOME.—V. 4. *Could not come nigh unto him for the press.* The crowd. *They uncovered the roof,* which was made of branches and twigs covered over with earth. *They let down the bed,* the mattress.

Applications.—1. Obstacles in the way do not mean that we are going in the wrong direction, or that God wants us to stop. They may increase our earnestness and develop our powers.

2. Faith and works are inseparably connected. He that really believes will act accordingly.

FAITH AND FORGIVENESS.—Vs. 5. *When Jesus saw their faith.* Shown by coming to him and by their persistence. All five showed faith. *Son.* A word of loving endearment. *Thy sins be (are) forgiven thee.* Jesus grants him the greater blessing first. The incident that seemed to be an interruption of Jesus' discourse was turned by him into an illustration of his teaching.

Practical Applications.—1. Sickness and trouble are instruments in God's providence for leading us to realize our sins and needs.

2. Unforgiven sin shuts us away from God and heaven. Forgiveness is not merely the taking away of the punishment of sin, but it is restoration to the family of God, to the enjoyment of his love as children.

3. Faith is the condition of salvation. Faith overcame the difficulties in the way. Faith led him to do as Jesus said, and take up what seemed an impossible duty. The faith that loves and chooses God is the beginning of heavenly life in the soul.

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.—V. 6. *There were certain of the scribes, the leaders of the nation, the teachers of the law. Reasoning in their hearts.* They held a dialogue within themselves. *Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?* To blaspheme is to speak injuriously, to slander God. *Who can forgive sins but God only?* Sins are against God, and, therefore, only God can forgive them. The reasoning of the scribes was right: "Only God can forgive sins." Therefore Jesus claimed to be God. *Jesus perceived in his spirit.* He knew inwardly, intuitively, what was going on in their minds. *Why reason ye? Why do you misjudge. Whether it is easier to say, etc.* As our Lord does not ask which is easier, to forgive sins or to raise a sick man; but which is easier to claim, this power or that; to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or to say, "Arise and walk?" Saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" could not be put to the proof. But the saying, "Arise and walk," could be tested on the spot. Both were divine acts.

He that could do one divine act proved that he had authority and power to do the other. *Ye may know that the Son of man.* The Son of God manifested in the flesh. *Hath power.* Both authority and power. The miracle was the signature of God to his nature and mission. *Arise.* Which would be impossible without a miracle. *Take up thy bed.* This would show the completeness of the cure. *He arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all.* A living witness to Jesus, and making the cure a visible illustration of the work which Jesus came to do.

Practical Application.—The outward fruits are the proofs of the inner life.

THE EFFECT ON THE MULTITUDE.—V. 12. *Insomuch that they were all amazed.* The miracle awakened a religious awe in their minds. Here was one also who had unlimited power. They also saw the goodness of God, his forgiving love; his readiness to help. *And glorified God.* They ascribed the honor and glory to God, as the source of this beneficent power. The good deeds of God's children honor God, and lead the souls of men toward him.

“INASMUCH AS YE DID IT NOT.”

"Master, I have this day broken no law of the Ten—have hurt no one. Is it enough?"

"Child, there stood one by thy side burdened with heavy tasks of lowly, earthly labor. For a little help, a little easing of the burden, he looked to thee. Thou hadst time and strength."

"Master, I did not see."

"Thine eyes were turned within. There was an ignorant one crying from out his darkness: 'Will none teach me?' I have given thee knowledge."

"Master, I did not hear."
"Thine ear was dull. There came a guest to seek thy converse, a human friend in quest of fellowship. I marked thy sigh, thy frown. Why was thy heart not glad?"

"I was reading. I hate to be disturbed, to be called from great thoughts to trifling talk."

"The children would have had thee some few moments in their play. Without thee they went wrong—how far wrong thou wilt not know. It is too late."

"Child's play? But I was searching for a hidden truth of spiritual import."

"Thou didst not turn aside to lift that lame one who had fallen by the way."

"I was in haste to do what I had planned. I meant to help him when I should return."

"Another lifted him. And shall I question further?"—Selected.

GOOD GROUND.

A boy in a printing office was given a list of Scripture questions and answers to set up and print. While at work he asked the foreman if he should follow "the copy"—that is, set up the type just as it was written.

"Certainly," said the foreman. "Why not?"

The boy replied "Because this copy is not like the Bible."

"How do you know that?"
"Why, I learned some of these verses in the Sabbath school, and I know that two of them are not like the Bible."

"Well, then, do not follow 'copy,' but set them up as they are in the Bible."

The boy took the Bible and made it his copy, guide and pattern. The words of God fell into good ground when he learned those verses in school and did

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Learn to attend strictly to your own business—a very important point.

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