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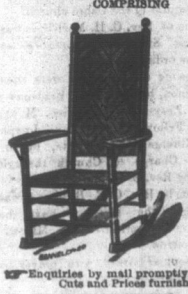

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BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

Fourth Quarter.

Lesson I. October 2. Matt. 8: 5-13.

THE CENTURION'S FAITH.

GOLDEN TEXT.

I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.—Matt. 8: 10.

I. THE CENTURION. 5. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum.* Having come down from the Mount of Beatitudes, with great multitudes following him (ver. 1). *There came unto him a centurion.* A Roman military officer. All Palestine was under Roman military government; this centurion was probably connected with the garrison at Capernaum. There were in each legion sixty centuries, each under the command of a centurion. *Beseeching him.* Not personally, but through the elders of the Jews (Luke 7: 3-5), who were under obligation to him for building their synagogue, who could represent his religious position, and whom he hoped would have more influence with the Jewish prophet than himself, a Gentile, could have.

II. THE CENTURION'S FAITH,—BENEVOLENT. 6. (Luke 7: 2, 4, 5.) The benevolent quality of the centurion's faith is shown (1) by its leading him to give a large sum for a synagogue for the worship of the God in whom he believed. True faith is always manifested in love to God and a desire to aid his cause. (2) It was shown by his love for his servant. *Sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.* "Palsy" is a shortened form of "paralysis." The words "grievously tormented" point to more acute suffering than is common in paralysis.

III. THE CENTURION'S FAITH,—HUMBLE. 7. *Jesus saith unto him.* By the delegation of elders who had brought the message. *I will come and heal him.* There was not only the willingness of love; there was likewise the thorough self-consciousness of power.

8. *The centurion answered.* Through some friends whom he sent to meet Jesus, as he drew near the house (Luke 7: 6) *I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.* This was an expression (1) of his conscious sinfulness. (2) Jesus was viewed by him wholly from the Jewish standpoint. As the houses of Gentiles were "unclean," entrance into them, and still more, familiar fellowship, would "defile."

True faith in God is humble, for it is conscious of its own unworthiness in the presence of a holy God, but feeling thus its own weakness, it lays hold on divine strength.

IV. THE CENTURION'S FAITH,—CONFIDENT AND INTELLIGENT. 8. *But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.* His faith was so strong that he realized that Jesus could work a miracle at a distance as well as near at hand.

9. *For I* (also) *am a man under authority.* The *also* is very necessary, and is translated in Luke 7: 8. The centurion draws a comparison between our Lord's position and his own. He was "a man under authority." The position of Christ was somewhat corresponding. He was sent from above. He held a commission. "All power—all authority—was given unto him." *And I say to this man, Go, and he goeth,* etc. He leaves it to our Lord to understand that he recognizes in him an authority beyond all, expecting the powers of nature to obey their Master, just as his soldiers or his servants obey him.

10. *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled.* A fact showing the reality of our Lord's human nature. *I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

THE GREATNESS OF THE CENTURION'S FAITH. I. It was great in Jesus' all-embracing love, reaching to a Gentile soldier's slave; and in his authority and power. 2. It was a victory over great obstacles. 3. His faith was great because it was strong, persistent, reasonable, unwavering.

V. THE CENTURION'S FAITH REWARDED. 11. *Many shall come from the east and west.* From the far-off nations, from people's who had then not even heard of the true God and his salvation. *And shall sit down with Abraham...in the kingdom of heaven.* To enjoy the feast of everlasting bliss. The expression "sit down" has reference to the position at the banqueting-table.

12. *But the children of the kingdom.* The Jews, the natural heirs of the patriarchs. *Shall be cast out into outer darkness.* The figure of a feast is still continued. Feasts were always held toward evening, and frequently protracted to a late hour (Luke 12: 38). The banqueting-house is lighted up; within is joy and festivity, but without is darkness. *There shall be weeping.* In sorrow. *And gnashing of teeth.* In rage.

13. *Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.* He received the favor he had sought with so earnest a faith.

A Brave Girl.

About one hundred and twenty years ago the pioneers of civilization in the backwoods of North America were in almost constant collusion with the most formidable of the Indian tribes, who had learned to use the weapon of the white men and who were resolved upon driving away those pale-faced invaders of their hunting grounds.

Many sad and terrible tragedies were enacted as the white settlers advanced farther and farther into the Indian country, traveling in large companies for safety, encamping at night by the watch-fire while wild beasts howled all around them, and too often finding on their path the slain and mutilated bodies of their countrymen. But if their difficulties and dangers were great, still greater was the courage of the men who first set their hands to the conquest of the mighty wastes of wood which were spread for hundreds of miles on every side of them. They knew that the incursions of the Indians were just as much to be expected as bad weather or any other trial in life, and they did their best to be prepared for them, after which they went about their daily labors with wonderful cheerfulness, considering the anxious circumstances in which they were placed.

In a neighborhood exposed to sudden attacks of the red men the first thing done was to establish some place of refuge to which the inhabitants of the various log-cabins might repair for shelter and mutual help. This was often a square stockade, enclosing a group of cabins, with a bastion of block-house at each corner, every side of these rude citadels and the stockades being, of course, well furnished with loop-holes. Here (if well furnished with food and ammunition) a very small garrison could make a spirited resistance and could generally hold out till relief arrived. Even women and girls in these rude encounters could perform feats of bravery from which men in more easy-going times might have shrunk.

A remarkable instance of feminine courage was shown in 1782, when a frontier settlement on the Ohio was attacked by an unusual large body of Indians. The inhabitants, warned in time, had taken refuge in the fort, where there were twenty able-bodied men, with twice as many women and children, under the command of a brave man, Col. Silas Vane. His brother, Ebenezer Vane, remained in his own house, about forty yards off, in order to protect a large quantity of ammunition which had been stored there and which there was no time to remove. Some seven or eight men and one or two women remained with Ebenezer, and being stout of heart they felt confident of being able to defend it.

The Indians, trusting to their numbers, attacked fiercely, but were again and again driven back. Through the night they tried to set fire to Ebenezer's house, but the design was frustrated by the vigilance of the defenders. Again the red men made a furious assault both on the fort and the house, but again they were received with a close and deadly fire which considerably thinned their numbers and filled them with the wildest fury. Meanwhile the women inside indulged in no weak lamentations, but steadily moulded bullets, loaded guns, and handed them to the men, who from every loophole were dealing death to the invaders without even losing one of their number. But now a terrible discovery was made. Such a prolonged seige had not been anticipated, and in the fort only a few charges of powder remained! What was to be done? The enemy had once more fallen back, but they might be expected to renew the attack at any moment, and if they should learn the deficiency of the garrison the brave defenders would soon be overpowered, fighting hand to hand with overwhelming numbers, while neither women nor children would meet with the smallest mercy. In this emergency there seemed nothing for it but that one of their number should dash to Ebenezer's house, get a keg of powder, and bring it back under fire of the besiegers. There were several volunteers for this daring service, which seemed almost certain death, considering that the woods were filled with the keen-sighted and furious enemy.

Among those willing to run the fearful risk was a girl, sister to the two Vanes. She had just returned from school in Philadelphia and was quite unused to the stirring scenes of frontier life, but her spirit made up for her inexperience. It was represented to her that a man being able to run quicker, would be in less danger, when the young heroine nobly replied that a man's life was worth more than hers in the present exigency.

"You have not a man to spare," she said, "while a woman will not be missed."

This was too true and the girl was allowed to go. Throwing off such clothing as might hinder her speed, she stood ready at the gate. It was suddenly flung open and she rushed out on her desperate errand.

The Indians were so taken by surprise that after exclaiming, "A squaw! a squaw!" they did not fire a single shot. But upon the girl's return with a bag full of powder slung around her waist they were upon the alert. She had to run the gauntlet of their balls, but not one touched her. Her anxious friends pulled her and her precious burden within the gate, while their shout of defiance told the Indians that the danger was over. They still hung about the fort and made several other attempts to storm it, but with no better success. On the third day they retreated, giving up as hopeless the siege, which would probably have ended far otherwise but for the heroism of a young girl.—*Chatterbox.*

The Woman's Crusade.

I do not know what you may think of the woman's crusade, but let me say as a woman who stood inside of it that the womanhood of this nation never laid such a tribute at the feet of its manhood as they did in the woman's crusade. If you want to find out what a boy is worth go and ask his mother. By the time she goes into the jaws of death to give him birth and then puts into him her days of love and her nights of care, and he stands before her strong, and clean, and tall at twenty-one, she can tell you what he is worth from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet; and when the legalized dram shop takes hold of him, and tears him down fibre by fibre, and puts oaths on the lips that she used to kiss, and crushes out his mother's hopes, it is no wonder she makes outcry. If you want to know what a home is worth go and ask a loving woman who has kept herself as pure as God's lilies from her marriage day, when, with a great shine in her eyes, she puts herself over into the hands of one man, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, until life's end. And when the dram shop with its fearful curse crosses the threshold of the home they built together and takes down her strong tower of hope, stone by stone, and degrades the father of her children, it is no wonder woman makes outcry.

What was the woman's crusade? It was a long smothered sob breaking into a cry; it was a midnight prayer coming abroad at noonday. You men sometimes say to us as we stand in places like this, "Home is your kingdom." We do not dispute it. We know it better than you know it. But it was our kingdom that was outraged. You say to us, standing ballotless and defenceless before this vampire of our civilization, "You do not need the ballot; we defend you by love and by law." Do you? When for eighty-five years by well-defined license legislation motherhood has been uncrowned and her children slain by law, and you made no protest against it. You have talked about it in religious meetings; you have prayed about it in prayer meeting; but when it came to the sweep of empire in the ballot-box and in political organizations, you have made no protest. Oh, men, I do not believe a civilization is worth much that cannot protect its women and its babes. Andy, grand as you are, and strong as you are, and true as you are, you will never be able to protect your women and your children and the dram shop at the same time. Oh, in shame, in very shame, either get up and strike down this enemy of the home and of womanhood and of childhood, or else put the ballot into the hands of your women for their own protection.—*Mrs. M. T. Lathrop.*

The Failure of Christ.

God was pleased that He who came as the Son of Man, our brother, should have this also as one of His trials—to labor in vain. He came to His own, and His own received Him not; He stretched out His hands all the day to a gainsaying and rebellious people; He encountered dead indifference, fierce opposition, reproach, and calumny; He was betrayed and deserted; was lifted up on a Cross in the midst of that Jerusalem over which he had wept in vain, died a malfactor's death and was buried in a stranger's grave. Those of you who have failed to find position or comfort, fame or sympathy, in the world may have One who can bear His share with you here, who chose this in life, which you call lose, that He might be nearer you, and show you that life has greater things than all you have coveted. Those of you who complain that you have labored for your fellow-men and God with small return, have One here who gave up infinitely higher things, and met from men a more cruel award. Is it not token of God's compassion that into a world of loss and dissapointment, of bruised hearts and shattered hopes, He sent His own Son to be the sharer of them—their sharer, that He might show men how to bear them? He had His hours of depression as we have—true, real, deep—explain it as we will; but He put His motive before the eye of God, and left the result unto Him. "He did not fail, neither was He discouraged." Through the clouds of depression He had star-like glimpses of the travail of His soul—the fruits of His toil that made Him say "I thank Thee, O Father"— and that helped Him to press on till He uttered from His Cross "It is finished"—that grand prophetic word which assures us that every life that has sought to do the will of God is a complete and perfect life, whenever and however it may close That word "It is finished," repeats this saying which came up from His Spirit long before—My judgment is with the Lord, and My work with My God."—*Dr. John Ker.*

Conquering by Politeness.

The Bible says "a soft answer turneth away wrath." The *Irish Times* tells of a case in which a gentle action served the same purpose:

"A brave, active, intelligent terrier, belonging to a lady friend, one day discovered a monkey, belonging to an itinerant organ-grinder, seated upon a bank within the grounds, and at once made a dash for him. The monkey, who was attired in jacket and hat, awaited the onset in such undisturbed tranquility that the dog halted within a few feet of him to reconnoitre. Both animals took a long steady stare at each other, but the dog evidently was recovering from his surprise, and about to make a spring for the intruder. At this critical juncture, the monkey, who had remained perfectly quiet hitherto, raised his paw and gracefully saluted by lifting his hat. The effect was magical. The dog's head and tail dropped, and he sneaked off to the house, refusing to leave it until his polite put mysterious guest had departed."

There are times when some animals act more sensible than some people, and this poor organ-grinder's monkey preached an excellent sermon to all who are too ready with fists or with angry words. It takes two to quarrel always, and if one *won't* the other *can't*.

—OBEDIENCE.—W. M. F. Round, a very high New York authority on prisons, intimately acquainted with the causes which kept them full, writes:

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