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Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

Third Quarter.

Lesson VII. August 14. Matt. 5: 1-16.

THE BEATITUDES.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,—John 1: 17.

HARMONY OF THE TWO ACCOUNTS. There seems at first sight to be a disagreement between the two accounts of the circumstances of the sermon, but they are easily harmonised, as follows: He "stood" first (Luke), and then "sat down" (Matthew), to teach on a "mountain" (Matthew), but on a "level place" on the mountain (Luke), from which he ascended a short distance up the hill to be better heard. It was primarily to "the disciples" (Matthew), but also for and in bearing of "the multitudes" (Luke).

I. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. 1. *And seeing the multitudes.* Who thronged about him to hear his words, and to be healed (Matt. 4: 24, 25). *He went up.* From the level place on the mountain (Luke 6: 12, 17), where the people were gathered, to a higher point, from which he could more easily be seen and heard by them. *Into a mountain.* The mountain, a well-known place. *When he was set.* This was the custom of the Jewish doctors, who taught sitting in token of their authority. *His disciples came unto him.* They gathered close to him, while the multitude were farther off, but within hearing.

II. THE BEATITUDES. That is, the Benedictions, the Blesseds.

First, observe that, though eight in number, there are here but seven distinct features of character. The eighth one—"persecuted for righteousness' sake"—denotes merely the possessors of the seven preceding features, on account of which they are persecuted (2 Tim. 3: 12). By the sevenfold character thus set forth, a complete character is meant to be depicted, and, by the sevenfold blessedness attached to it, a perfect blessedness is intended.

Second, observe that the things here promised, far from being mere arbitrary rewards, will be found in each case to grow out of the characters to which they are attached.

Third, observe that they do not describe so many distinct characters, but essentially the same character under so many distinct aspects.

Fourth, Contrast with the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments are negative, the Beatitudes positive. The one forbids, the other enjoins.

FIRST BEATITUDE. *Blessed.* The word expresses a permanent state of felicity, rather than the passive reception of a blessing bestowed by another. *Are the poor in spirit.* Conscious of want, feeling the need of what is higher and better than they have. The opposite of pride and self-righteousness. It is the door not only to the kingdom of heaven, but to the kingdom of knowledge, of nature, of science. *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Christ's kingdom. His spiritual kingdom, begun here, completed hereafter above.

SECOND BEATITUDE. *Blessed are they that mourn.* (1) The mourning referred to springs from sympathy with God, whose will is so grievously disregarded and thwarted by men. (2) It is an absolute promise to all those who "in the kingdom of heaven" are brought into the experience of mourning, and is to be interpreted by such passages as Rom. 5: 3-5, Heb. 12: 11, and Rev. 7: 14. *For they shall be comforted.* By God, who is the God of all comfort. They that mourn for sin shall be comforted by forgiveness and salvation from sin. They that mourn from sorrow shall, if Christians, be sustained by a thousand promises. Those who mourn for the sins of the world shall be comforted, for that state of heart most impels and best fits us to save men from sin; and the labors for that end shall be successful.

THIRD BEATITUDE. 5 This Beatitude is found in almost the same form in Ps. 37: 11. *Blessed are the meek.* Mild of temper, gentle, not easily provoked or irritated, given to forbearance under injuries. Opposed to the ambitious, the self-seeking spirit. *For they shall inherit the earth.* Not the new heavens and the new earth, nor the land of promise, *i. e.*, the heavenly kingdom hereafter, nor great spiritual blessings here, but literally *the earth.* (1) The meek obtain the maximum of true joy in all conditions of life. He, and he only, possesses the earth, as he goes toward heaven, by being humble and cheerful, and content with what his good God has allotted him. (2) Christ's kingdom, whose members are characterized by meekness, is yet to possess the whole earth.

FOURTH BEATITUDE. 6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst.* Not merely desire, but have an intense desire, that must be satisfied. The greatness of the soul is measured by the number, the intensity, and the quality, of its desires. This is the highest and best desire, and men are good in proportion to its intensity. *After righteousness.* A perfect inner and outer life; perfect conformity to God's law and nature; the beauty of holiness. *For they shall be filled.* The desire shall be satisfied abundantly. They shall be righteous, and in the future shall have a goodness beyond their present power even to conceive.

FIFTH BEATITUDE. 7. *Blessed are the merciful.* Those who pity, sympathize with, and help to relieve, all misery and suffering. This is the natural outward expression of the inner hungering after righteousness. *For they shall obtain mercy.* Not only from men, because the tender consideration of the merciful from others reacts in tender regard of others for ourselves, but also from God (Ps. 18: 25; Prov. 3: 34. Compare Matt. 18: 23-35). Showing mercy to others proves that we have a state of heart which makes it safe for God to forgive us. For him to forgive the unmerciful, would be to multiply sins and wrongs.

SIXTH BEATITUDE. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart.* Pure, sincere, clean, in motive and purpose. That state of soul which repels, loathes, everything vile or sinful. *For they shall see God.* There must be a likeness of nature and feeling, in order to understand another. So only the pure can see a pure God. The impure, the bad, cannot even see him, much less enjoy him. It is a moral color-blindness.

SEVENTH BEATITUDE. 9. *Blessed are the peacemakers.* (1) In its literal meaning it implies those lovers of God and man who utterly detest and abhor all strife and debate, all variance and contention, and accordingly labor with all their might either to prevent this fire of hell from being kindled, or when it is kindled, from breaking out, or when it is broke out, from spreading any further. (2) Those who, from this same disposition, seek, like their Master, to reconcile men to God. *For they shall be called the children of God.* Shall not only be the children of God, but shall also be recognized as such. It is this peace-giving quality, which, above all others, is counted among men as saintliness.

EIGHTH BEATITUDE. 10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.* Here there is a profound significance in the order. The work of the peacemakers is not a light and easy work. There is something suggestive in the fact that the last promise is the same as the first. We end, as we began, with *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* But the path by which we have been led leads us to see that that includes all the intermediate blessings, of which at first it seemed but the prelude and beginning. But it must be *for righteousness' sake*, and not for the sake of ambitious plans, or strange doctrines, or censorious language, or proud and exclusive pretensions, if the promise annexed would be secured.

11. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you.* Or abuse you to your face, in opposition to backbiting (see Mark 15: 32). *Falsely for my sake.* Lest thou shouldst think that the mere fact of being evil spoken of makes men blessed, he has set two limitations: when it is *for his sake*, and when the things that are said are *false*.

12. *Rejoice* (exult), *and be exceeding glad.* This phrase implies a glorious and exulting joy. *For great is your reward in heaven.* Either in heaven, given in a future state of blessedness, or heavenly, spiritual, that is, in the enjoyment of the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. *For so persecuted they the prophets.* Jeremiah was scourged (Jer. 20: 2); Zechariah, son of Joholada, was stoned (2 Chron. 24: 21); Isaiah, according to Jewish tradition, was sawn asunder by Manasseh. Elijah's life was sought, and many other prophets were persecuted; and within two years Jesus himself was to be persecuted even unto death.

III. RELATIONS OF THE CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM TO THE WORLD. FIRST RELATION. 13. *Ye.* Who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven, and whose characters are described by the foregoing Beatitudes. *Are the salt of the earth.* Ye are to the human race what salt is to food,—the element which preserves it from corruption, and gives savor and relish, and preserves from insipidity. *But if the salt have lost its savour.* The salt of all the East, contains a large quantity of insoluble residuum, which remains flavorless after the real salt has dissolved out. The truth, then, which our Lord inculcated, was that if they, the salt of the earth, the living depositaries of true wisdom and holiness among men, lost the power and savor of vital godliness, they would not only be worthless so far as the enlightening and sanctification of others were concerned, but would also be cast out themselves. A professing Christian may have the sparks and glittering particles of true wisdom, like this savorless salt, but be without its pungency and power. *It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot.* It is not only good for nothing, but it actually destroys all fertility wherever it is thrown; and this is the reason why it is cast into the street. Those people and churches which keep the form but have lost the power of godliness,—who hold to outward beliefs, but have no spiritual life, who go through ceremonies, but have not the indwelling Holy Spirit,—not only are of no use in making the world better, but themselves shall be destroyed.

SECOND RELATION. 14. *Ye are the light of the world.* Light is not only opposed to darkness, but overcomes it; so the truth and holiness possessed by the disciples of Christ, who is the true light, dispel the world's darkness, by overcoming its ignorance and sin. *A city set on a hill.* No image could so vividly set forth the calling of the Church of Christ as a visible society. For good or for evil, it could not fail to be prominent in the world's history, a city of refuge for the weary, or open to the attacks of the invader.

15. *Neither do men light a candle* (rather, a lamp), *and put it under a bushel.* The word rendered *bushel* is the Latin term *modius*, which was "a dry measure," nearly corresponding to the English peck. *But on a candlestick.* Or lampetand; its proper place

HOW DISCIPLES MAY CONCEAL THEIR LIGHT. (1) By letting their light burn dim, having little spiritual life. (2) By living in an atmosphere of worldly-mindedness. (3) By faults and sins and disagreeable ways. (4) By not making a public profession of religion. (5) By not speaking to others of their spiritual experiences.

16. *Let your light so shine before men.* A true light must shine. The Christian spirit must express itself. *That they may see your good works.* This does not contradict what is forbidden in Matt. 6: 1-6. There, doing alms and uttering prayers for the purpose of being seen of men is forbidden. But (1) that is the shining of ambition and pride and self-righteousness, not of the true Christian spirit. (2) Such good deeds do not so shine as to glorify our heavenly Father.

HOW DISCIPLES MAY LET THEIR LIGHT SHINE. (1) By keeping their light brightly burning. (2) By a pure and holy life. (3) By special good deeds and self-sacrifices for others. (4) By doing all in humility, and for the Lord's sake. (5) By a public profession of religion. (6) By doing everything possible for the salvation of men.

Two People.

The work of the morning was done.

A bright fire burned on the hearth, my canary sang blithely in the window, and the room was so bright and my own heart so light that I actually found myself trilling a running accompaniment to his gay little song as I sat down before my work-basket.

I had reasons for being happy on this especial morning for only yesterday "John," my husband, had made a fortunate investment that had enabled him to put in the bank a snug little sum for that "rainy day" that people are always talking about, but so seldom provide for.

Then I had at last succeeded, after suffering like poor Dora in David Copperfield, from "a long line of incapables," in getting a good cook, and last, but by no means least, a small literary venture of my own had been accepted by a leading magazine, so life blossomed around me just now.

The door-bell rang, and presently my small satellite, black Molly, presented herself bearing a card, and I read the name of my caller—"Mrs. Jeremiah Johnson."

I sighed as I saw it, for I knew the lady well, and could feel the coming of the "cold wave" with the very name. However, as it was Tuesday and my reception day, there was no escape for me, and so I descended to the parlor, and greeted as hospitably as I could the stately lady, who in the stiffest and most stylish of costumes awaited me.

"Good morning Mrs. Grant! I do hope I have not disturbed you, I see you are looking pale; I fear you are not well."

I politely assured my guest that I was quite well, but felt an inward shrinking of heart, for I had been a wretched invalid, and only recently had begun to hope that I was really getting strong and robust again.

"Do you take care of yourself, my dear Mrs. Grant?" she went on. "You of all others should be extremely careful."

I flushed painfully, for could I ever forget that consumption had claimed two fair young sisters, and that dreadful hereditary doom might some day be mine? I felt sick and faint, but tried to get up a diversion by speaking of her own family—asking after her children, etc.

"That makes me think, Mrs. Grant. I met your Alice on her way to school, and I noticed how much she is getting to stoop. Don't you think she should have shoulder braces, or learn calisthenics?"

Alice was my one treasure—my cherished "ewe lamb," and I winced, but replied, as calmly as I could, that "I had not noticed the stoop."

"Ah, yes! that is just the way we mothers do not see things as our friends do. Now there was poor dear Mrs. Mallon, she did not know that her Sarah had a cough until all the neighbors were talking about the poor child being in rapid decline. I think the place of a friend is to put us on our guard don't you agree with me?"

Faintly came my reply, "Yes to be sure;" but I felt on the rack.

Making another desperate effort, I plunged recklessly into the housekeeping affairs, which ordinarily I abhor, and mentioned incidentally the name of my new cook.

Mrs. Johnson's hands were raised in horror. "Phœbe Ellis; you don't mean it; you haven't that girl, have you? Did you know that she was sent away from the Smith's because so many articles were missing? Three silver spoons went within the month, and ever so many smaller things besides. It is a mercy that I called here this morning, for, of course, you will not keep her now."

Instantly a vision of my breakfast-table that morning, with its clear amber coffee, delicious muffins, and carefully broiled steak rose before me, and I replied stiffly: "I shall certainly investigate the matter," but I inwardly resolved to cling to Phoebe and her muffins.

"Do you find this house at all damp?" was the lady's next query.

This was another blow, for we had found a little mould on the walls, and were rather anxious about it; but I managed to evade a direct reply, merely saying that "we had found the house quite comfortable," thinking in my heart, "Oh! will she ever go?"

My next effort I fondly hoped might lure my tormentor into a congenial channel, for I asked very politely after the lord of Mrs. Johnson's affections—Mr. Jeremiah Johnson.

"He is well in body," she answered, "but has been half worried to death by all that trouble in the 'Bank of the Republic.'"

I felt myself grow pale to my lips, but managed to stammer out "What trouble do you mean?"

"Only that people think it is in a very critical condition, and Mr. Johnson says it is liable to 'break' any day."

Now this last meant ruin and poverty for us, for the Bank of the Republic was the very one where my "John" had deposited his savings.

I had not the nerve to talk much more, and greatly to my relief my guest arose, saying she had several more visits to pay, and taking my hand at parting, she said; "I hope, my dear, you will be better when I come again. You must keep up, and try to be more cheerful, Mrs. Grant."

Slowly I toiled up-stairs to my room, feeling like another woman entirely.

The fire had died out on the hearth. The sun no longer shone in at the window, and the bird had tucked his little head under his wing, and was croughing forlornly in a corner of the cage.

Life seemed hardly worth an effort to me, as I sank wearily into a rocking-chair, too utterly disheartened to even cry.

The bell pealed through the house again, and Molly opened the door, grinning from ear to ear.

"Mis' Bright done come for to see ye; she say as how she did'nt have no kyard to send up, but she done com all the same."

Wearily I dragged myself down stairs again, without a ray of interest in any one or any thing.

"What was the use of struggling?" I thought. "Here was Alice in a decline, the bank on the eve of failure, and I probably soon going off in a consumption, leaving my 'John' to marry some fresh young girl and forget me utterly—and then, too, the household arrangements would be all 'at sea,' again if Phœbe had to leave."

Just at this point I reached the parlor door, and before I was fairly in the room two soft warm hands clasped mine and a cheerful voice was saying—

"I am so glad to find you at home, Mrs. Grant, and to see you looking so much better than when I saw you last. Your trip to Atlantic City must have done you a world of good. Come, and sit down now, and tell me all about your husband and Alice. By the way, I saw the dear child on the street yesterday, and it did my heart good to see her so bright and rosy."

And so she talked on in her cheerful, loving way until I could have cried for joy at the change that stole, with every word, over my whole horizon.

Without seeming effort, she skilfully drew out all that was best and most hopeful in my daily life, and, before I quite knew it, I had told her all about the money in the bank and the new cook in the kitchen.

"That reminds me," said Mrs. Bright, as I mentioned the name of Phoebe Ellis, "of that cruel story that went the round about that poor girl. The Smith's silver spoons were found in the coal-bin and the girl was as innocent as a child."

Life began to look worth living again, to I had so dreaded another succession of "stated supplies" in my kitchen.

Such lovely, pleasant things as that blessed little woman said to me—such helpful words—such graceful and well-aimed comments upon this and that subject—and every word fell like balm upon my unquiet heart.

"What a lovely little home you have, Mrs. Grant! I know you must thank God for it every day, and isn't it sweet to know that we are doing work for him in making home bright for those we love? That reminds me. I saw Mrs. Martin, the principal of your Alice's school, the other day, and she says that she believes the child is a Christian already—that she is the most conscientious girl in her whole school, so you see, my dear, your training is bearing fruit already."

My heart swelled high with gratitude, but no words came. This was joy too deep for utterance.

"But, what a long visit I have made you, do pardon it, but I always enjoy coming to see you so much," and the lady arose as she spoke and began to fasten her wrap as she moved to the door.

As we reached the vestibule, she turned—"I forgot to tell you that Mr. Bright was in the court-room when your husband was arguing that case last week, and he says all the lawyers are talking about his speech, and saying that Mr. Grant would 'make his mark' one of those days "Take care," she added gayly, "you may go to Congress yet!"

I actually trembled with delight for John, and John's fame—what were they not to me?

"Let me ask you just one question, Mrs. Bright," said I, as she held my hand in hers on the door-step. "It is about the 'Bank of the Republic?' Is it going to fail, do you think?"

She laughed merrily. "Why, where have you been for two months past? That rumor was in September, and blew over weeks ago. There was a defaulting cashier and a 'run' on it, but it went safely through, and is as good now as the Bank of England. Good bye, come soon to see me," and she ran gayly down the steps, smiling back at me from the pavement.

Back I went once more to my room and my work, pondering meanwhile, as I never did before, the stupendous question of personal influence, and the outcome of my wise reflections was this: Be careful what kind of an atmosphere you carry about with you.—*The Presbyterian Observer.*

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JAMES A. HARDING,
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I thank you for the prompt payment of my claim of $2000, being the amount of certificate issued by your Society, and held by my late husband, William E. Trefry.
I was somewhat prejudiced against Life Insurance Companies at the time when my husband applied for membership in your Society, but my sad experience since has caused a change of feeling, and I heartily recommend your Society to those who are eligible for Life insurance.
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