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BIBLE LESSONS.

Third Quarter.

STUDIES IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

Lesson III. July 20. Luke 14: 25-35.

TAKING UP THE CROSS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Whoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." Luke 14: 27.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE FIRST TEST, OR CONDITION, OF DISCIPLESHIP. 25. And there went great multitudes with Him. This may have reference to the multitudes who were attending the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, which occurred about the middle of December. There was probably some vague hope that Jesus was the Messiah, and would soon take the throne and inaugurate the new kingdom; and they would like to have part in it. He turned and said unto them. Jesus never allured any one to become His disciple by concealing the truth, or by a one-sided presentation of the facts. As a fisherman for souls, He never attracted them by "bait" which concealed a hook, but only by real food, which drew to a larger and better abundance.

26. If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, etc. It is not so much the true explanation to say that hate here means love less, as to say that when our nearest and dearest relationships prove to be positive obstacles in coming to Christ, then all natural affections must be flung aside; comp. Deut. 13: 6-9, 21, 19-21, 33 5, 9. A reference to Matt. 10: 37 will show that "hate" means hate by comparison. Our Lord purposely stated great principles in their boldest and even most paradoxical form by which He alone has succeeded in impressing them forever as principles on the hearts of His disciples. The meaning is that from the higher motive of love to Jesus and the truth we are sometimes compelled, and must always be ready, to leave our dearest friends, to go contrary to their wishes, to give them up as a complete matter of course, and to stand, as it were, utterly opposed, thus acting, apparently, toward them as one who hates them would naturally do. It cannot mean that we are to hate them in the sense of wishing them evil, for that is contrary to every precept and principle of the gospel. The sum and love of Christ intensifies and increases and purifies our love for our friends, for father and mother and family. It transfigures the earthly love with the perfect love which the saints and angels feel in heaven. But Christ and the truth are supreme, and if the choice is forced upon us as between Him with all He represents, and them, there is to be no hesitation. Yes, and his own life also. He must be willing to die for Christ's sake. To every one who has the things which he prizes dearer than his life, a man that will do wrong, that will violate his conscience, give up truth and honor, for the sake of saving his life, is far from being a truly good man. He cannot be My disciple, unless he is the lover of Jesus. For Jesus had all His life been living according to the principles He had just laid down.

II. THE SECOND TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP. 27. The previous verses speak of the negative side—what we must not do to leave and give up for Christ. Now we must come to the positive side—what we must do. Whoever doth not bear his own cross. Take it up; a willing assumption, not a patient submission, is implied. The Roman custom obliged the crucified to carry his own cross to the place of punishment. To this custom reference is here made. The meaning of the symbol is, whoever is not willing freely to deny himself, even unto death, and that the most painful and shameful, is not My disciple. This is a prophetic reference to Christ's own death; and His life and death illustrate His meaning. And come after Me: follow My example, live according to My principles, take Me for his master and teacher, believe My doctrines, obey My words, uphold My cause. Cannot be My disciple, because such do not learn of Him, do not accept His instruction, do not follow Him, do not obey Him as teacher.

III. COUNTING THE COST. THE UNRENDERED TOWER. We see in this parable the expense, by the next, the perils of our course. 28. For which of you, intending to build a tower, the building of a tower may be named as symbolical of providing a refuge for oneself, a place of safety, to which the assured favor of God may be likened. Building is in the New Testament a common metaphor to express the process by which character is formed, little by little, until the whole soul becomes a temple of God, for the indwelling of His Spirit. See Matt. 7: 24; 1 Cor. 3: 11-16; 1 Pet. 2: 5. In framing the resolution to begin a Christian life, it is necessary to consider what it will cost, of self-renunciation, to maintain a consistent Christian character. Sifted not down first, and counted the cost. This implies "the careful consideration of the requirements of discipline."

COUNTING THE COST. It costs something to be a Christian. It indeed costs more not to be one; but no one can become a Christian except at real cost. 29. And all that behold it begin to mock him, for he publishes his weakness and his folly. But the worst mocking will be that of his own heart. IV. COUNTING THE COST; THE UNRENDERED TOWER. On what king? "Here also there may have been a side glance at contemporary history." Perce, where Christ spoke these words, was under the government of Herod Antipas, whose divorce of his wife "had involved him in a war with her father, Antipas, an Arabian king in which his army was destroyed, and the Jewish historian sees in this the commencement of all his subsequent misfortunes." Going to make war against another king. The warfare brings to our remembrance the conflict depicted in Matt. 13: 23. Sifted not down first, and counted the cost. The Christian is a King, but a King engaged in a struggle, and a struggle with an enemy materially stronger than himself. Therefore, before entering the conflict, a declaration of war by the open profession of the gospel, a man must have taken counsel with

himself, and become assured that he is willing to accept the extreme consequences of this position, even to the giving up of his life if demands; this condition is expressed in ver. 27. 32. He sendeth an ambassador and desireth conditions of peace. What the king did in the parable was what a real king would naturally do, and simply expressed the fact that he would be a disciple must count the cost, and act accordingly. "Christ enforces the alternative of Matt. 6: 24. As Joshua, in Josh. 24: 15, and Elijah, in 1 Kings 18: 21, Christ compels a choice. In effect He bids those who are not willing to take up their cross in order to follow Him, to abandon all thought of becoming His disciples, and go back to their allegiance to the world."

33. He that forsaketh not. The Greek word so rendered is more commonly translated, "but farewell" or "take leave." All that he hath. This is almost exactly what Jesus said to the young ruler seeking eternal life (Matt. 19: 16-22). The principle is, that we are to give up everything to Christ—our property, our time, our all—so that He would have us. V. AN ILLUSTRATION FROM SAUL. 34. Salt is good. Rev. Ver., "salt, therefore, is good," connecting this with what goes before. Those disciples who decide right, being content with what give up all to Jesus and follow Him, are the salt of the earth, and that is good. The disciples are the salt of the earth, because they do for the spiritual world, what salt does for the natural world.—It preserves from corruption, season if it is insipid, freshen and sweeten it. Wherever salt is, it seasons: have its power to preserve. 35. It is neither fit for the land, etc. It is not only good for nothing itself, but it is good for nothing if it is anywhere it is thrown; and this is the reason why it is cast into the street. So troublesome is this corrupted salt, that no man will allow it to be thrown on his field; and the only place for it is the street, and there it is cast to be trodden under foot of men. The churches and the people who 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,—are only of no use in making the world better, but themselves shall be destroyed. There is no place nor use for them. He that hath ears. He that has need of this truth, and is so spiritually alive as to be able to understand, let him attend, arouse his faculties, and apply the truth to his conduct.

Little Things. BY WILLAMETTA A. PRISTON. "Oh, dear me! I wish I was grown up!" exclaimed Mrs. Avery, throwing down her book. Then crossing the room she took her favorite place by her mother's side. "Why pet, what's the matter now?" asked Mrs. Avery, gently smoothing the hair of her daughter. "I thought you liked to be my little girl."

"So I do, mamma, you put so much love in your voice; but I almost hate the word when other people call me so. Sometimes it seems as if we children were always a burden on their hands. We can do nothing. When I read about those wonderful girls in the story books I seem to see so many things we could do if we only had a chance."

Mrs. Avery smiled with tender sympathy. She understood just what Mrs. Avery meant. There seemed to be no place for these little ones—yet might there not be some work for the Master which these children could do better than older ones? "Did you want, Vio?" asked Mrs. Avery, after a few moments of rapid thought. "We want a society, mamma, like the others. There's the Young People's society, but they say we are too little to belong, and we can't go to the mission society, because the literary and musicals, nor anything. We don't want to play all the time. I'm sure there's something we can do without waiting to grow up." Vio's face was the picture of despair.

"Then if a society is what you want and there are none you can join, you must have one of your own. I will help you." Vio jumped up and threw her arms around her mother's neck. No other reply was needed. Mrs. Avery, throwing down her book, and to come here tomorrow after school, and we will talk it over."

"And we can have a name, and feel who to do?" "I will give you a motto." "Vio was happy now. She could amuse baby Fred, feed her mother, do the dishes, and finish her book, sure that mamma would bring it all out right, and that they would have the society they wanted so long."

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duties done faithfully, little kindnesses to make others happy, are all any of us can do. It is only putting the little things together that make them seem large. It was hard for the little ones to understand this last sentence. "Little drops of water, Little grains of sand, Make the mighty ocean And the pleasant land," repeated Vio.

To vast eternity. Mrs. Avery told them about the ants, the coral insects, and other little things, "Oh, yes, I see what you mean now," laughed Flossie Rivers. If each of us does all the little things we can we shall do lots all together. We'll have Little Things for the name of our society, and we'll do little things even if they do laugh at us."

"I have a motto for you," added Mrs. Avery, as the others consented to Flossie's proposition: "Take special care of little things, For they are born on angels' wings."

Remember, my dears, that a kind word, a smile, a little help with a hard lesson, quiet obedience, and all the other little things you can think of to make others happy, will be your work. Try it for one week; then we will talk it over together."

"And well find if Jesus says anything about little things," added Fannie Harris, as contented as if their work had been for the South Sea Islanders, as she had proposed. Thirteen little girls, pledged to prompt obedience, to think of the happiness of others instead of themselves, to do one kind deed a day, and just beginning to realize the importance of so-called little things.

Was it strange that even in the first week, parents, teacher, and schoolmates should notice the improvement? They were amazed to find how many things there were for them to change. They had not realized how careless they were nor how thoughtless of others' happiness. They would stop whispering and go to studying, as they thought of Mrs. Avery's sweet words.

There was one child who had reason to rejoice at this change. Little Bell Adams had little comfort at home, and at school the girls had made fun of her and plagues her, until her blue eyes filled with tears. Now, the very next day after the new society was formed, all this was changed. Susie Niles helped her to hang her sack and hood on the high nail. Vio gave her a large apple at recess, and Flossie Rivers let her take her cherished drawing slate. Little things truly, but they made Bell wonderfully happy, and when she reached her home it was with a bright face that cheered her sad mother. She kept the baby amused, and laughed as she told her mother of her happy day which brightened their poor home for the entire evening.

After a few days, the girls asked her to join their society and to go with them to Mrs. Avery's. Vio had given her another full account of all they had done, so that she was ready to give little Bell a warm welcome. "Oh Mrs. Avery, there are so many little things, they will keep us busy all winter," laughed Flossie, making room for Bell on the lounge between herself and Vio. "I'm afraid we shan't have time for anything else."

"And Jesus does want us to do little things, for He says, if we will give a cup of cold water to one of His little ones for His sake," said Susie Niles. Week by week they met with Mrs. Avery, learning valuable lessons of the importance of little things, bringing their difficulties and discouragements to her for advice and help. Each week there was some hopeful thought from God's Word. There were many little things done, the influence of which is still at work, and the older ones have learned not to despise those who can only do little things, for their own work is composed of the same.

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