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The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter—Lesson IX—May 30

CHRISTIAN FAITH LEADS TO GOOD WORKS.—James 2: 14-23.

Commit verses 14-17.

GOLDEN TEXT. *-I will show thee my faith by my works.*

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES. The author. He was not James the brother of John, and son of Zebedee, who was martyred A. D. 44, nor James the son of Alpheus, called James the Less. Whether he was the son of Mary and the real half brother of Jesus, or only the son of Joseph and not of Mary, or a cousin, adopted into the family, is a matter of dispute. He was a person of influence and distinction in the church.

He was called James the Just a strong observer of the law, both moral and ceremonial; indifferent to the luxuries and comforts of life, honoring the poor more than the rich, visiting the fatherless and the widow, slow to judge.

According to Josephus, he was stoned to death at the age of sixty-three.

The theme of the Epistle is the perfect man, in the perfection of the Christian life.

Its object was to improve the morality of the disciples, and save them from the sins and temptations to which they were especially liable, under their circumstances. It is one of the General Epistles, written to no particular church, but to the Jewish Christians everywhere.

THE RELATION OF FAITH AND WORKS.

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD, AND CAN SAVE NO ONE.—Vs. 14-17. *What doth it profit?* What is the use. *Though a man say he hath faith.* The man has something which he thinks is faith. *And have not works.* The works which belong to faith, which are the expression of faith in Jesus; the fruits of the Spirit. *Can faith*, that kind of faith, *save him.* Save him from sin, save him to a holy life, to heaven.

Many of the mistakes about faith grow out of a false idea of what it is to be saved. To be saved is to be saved from our sinful nature, to be made holy, and thus fitted to dwell in a holy heaven; and therefore faith in Christ is the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin, and as our Lord, so that we obey and love him as our perfect and holy Redeemer.

If a brother, etc. There was no real love, no true generosity. What good did such feelings do? In like manner, faith that is a mere belief of a creed or theory, so that *it hath not works*, the fruits that ought to come from faith, *is dead, being alone.* It dies as a seed that does not sprout, it is dead in its very nature, as is proved by its not going out of itself.

FAITH PROVED BY ITS WORKS.—Vs. 18-20. *Yea, a man may say.* Any man of common sense and piety. *Shew me thy faith without*, apart from, *thy works.* As one would attempt to prove that he has the power of speech without speaking. It is easy to assert that one has faith, but there is no way of showing it except by its natural fruit and expression. *And I will shew thee my faith by my works.* By the fruits which are the natural outcome of the faith You prove that a tree has life by leaves and fruits. You prove that what seems a fire is not a picture, but real fire, by its light and heat. You prove that a tree is a good tree by the fruit it bears. *Thou believest that there is one God.* Very well, that is good; but of what kind is your faith? *The devils*, (Demons), *also believe.* They are the "unclean spirits" of the gospels. They know that there is a God, but it produces no good works in them. It makes them *tremble*, with fear, without making them any better. But such faith is of no use. *Faith without works is dead.* The R. V., says, is barren, idle, useless.

THE HARMONIOUS ACTION OF FAITH AND WORKS.—Vs. 21-23. *Was not Abraham.... justified?* Made righteous and treated as righteous. Was he not received into the family of God as a friend and disciple, *by works.* That is because he did that which faith required of him, in being willing to offer up his son Isaac, even though he could not understand how the promises could be fulfilled if he did. Here was a great test of Abraham's faith, but the proof that he had faith was in his works in obeying the command. So that he was really justified by works, since the faith would not have been without works. And the next verse shows that he means he was justified by that which produced works, and not that kind of believing which the devils have and tremble. *Had offered.* He brought the offering to the altar, though God prevented its accomplishment. *How faith wrought with his works*, as their source. There was real faith behind the works. *By works was faith made perfect.* It was "by works" that faith was brought to its completion. *The scripture was fulfilled.* (Gen. 15: 6.) *Imputed....for righteousness.* Reckoned, confined to him. The true, obedient, trusting spirit was the main thing, for it was certain to produce corresponding action. *He was called the Friend of God.* Because he trusted in God so perfectly.

Paul and James. Quite frequently Paul has been regarded as holding opinions contrary to these of James. But as a matter of fact they agree. They do not "stand face to face, fighting against each other, but back to back, fighting opposite foes." James writes of faith in 1: 3, 6; 2: 1, 5, 6, 22 26, in terms which might have been adopted *verbatim* by Paul; and Paul in 2 Corinthians 9: 8; Ephesians 2: 10; Colossians 1: 10; 2 Thessalonians 2: 17, and in multitudes of other passages, writes of works in terms which might have been *verbatim* adopted by James. Both apostles would have freely conceded that faith without works is barren, and works without faith are mere legal righteousness.

REGULATIVE AND SPECULATIVE BELIEFS. Some writer has made this distinction. There are beliefs which do not necessarily affect one's conduct. They are mere speculations and reasoning, and do not necessarily influence one's conduct any more than beliefs about the nature of the sun's rays, or the source of its light and heat, affect one's use of those rays. But there are other beliefs which take hold of the heart and life, and these cannot be wrong without the life also becoming wrong; as our belief in the necessity of sunshine to health, and to the growth of plants, will influence our conduct in reference to it. Many of the differences of opinion as to faith arise from ignoring this distinction.

The way to produce better works in men is by inspiring more and deeper faith.

ILLUSTRATION. If men want roses, they apply their efforts at culture to the root and the plant, not because they care more for the roots, but because culturing the root and stalk is the means of obtaining roses. So we preach faith, because that is the way to obtain works.

Needs of the Sabbath School.

Under the above caption, Rev. C. J. Kephart, makes timely suggestions. Speaking of the Sabbath school and the church, he says:

"The Sabbath school needs a more distinct recognition by the church as to its value and importance as an institution of the church.

Let no one become excited because it is implied in this that the church does not give it the proper recognition. This is a fact, and a fact that needs to be increasingly emphasized. The Jews were wiser here than are the Christians. They recognized, with vastly greater clearness than we do the importance of the Bible school - the institution for the teaching of the Word of God. The rabbis say, 'If you would destroy the Jews, you must first destroy their schools.' 'The true guardians of the city are the teachers.' The Sabbath school is the church's Bible school.

But with eighty per cent of the adult church-membership not identified with it, with the widespread disregard of the interests of the Sabbath school as is exhibited in church architecture, with almost the complete failure of the church to make adequate provision for the training and development of teachers, with the general indifference of the church to the existence or non-existence of the teachers' meeting, with a manifest jealousy of the Sabbath school upon the part of the Christian ministry, as in many cases there is, we have before us all the evidence needed that the Sabbath school has not occupied the place in the thought and heart of the church that its mission and service justify.

Before the great improvement of which the Sabbath school is capable can be made, it must receive a larger share of the church's attention. The church must 'hunger and thirst' after better Sabbath schools."

A Successful Sunday-School Prayer-Meeting

In the fall of 1893 the Sunday school of the Nostrand Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, Brooklyn, New York, began to meet in a fine new chapel. This building is one of the finest structures of its class in the country, costing over fifty thousand dollars, and admirably adapted in all its appointments for Sunday school work, according to modern ideas of this institution. Our efficient superintendent, then and now, R. G. Davisson, Esq, saw at once that along with much good the new chapel brought with it in a most attractive form the old temptation to rely upon external and material helps and agencies, rather than upon spiritual realities and life. He felt that in the true idea of the Christian Sunday school there could be no substitute for God and the life of God in the soul, and that in some way the school ought to be made to feel its constant dependence upon God. How better than by prayer?

But if by prayer, how? He began by calling meetings of the teachers and officers after the session of the school, but as a rule only teachers were present, and only a portion of these, and they, being naturally among the most earnest, were more or less wearied after the duties of a busy Sunday. Even if all the teachers had been uniformly present at these meetings, he still felt that something was lacking It was the Sunday school as such that needed this sense of God. A meeting of Sunday school teachers for prayer was not a Sunday school prayer-meeting, and this was the real end aimed at. He would be satisfied with nothing short of it.

Mr. Davisson then began, on one Sunday of every month, shortening the length of the session for that purpose, to ask for voluntary prayers from the teachers and others present, to be offered in any part of the room. The hesitation and pauses that naturally ensued were somewhat embarrassing and depressing; the more restless and noisy of the boys were inclined to grow still more restless and noisy, and, after a time, this plan also was abandoned.

Our superintendent was thus gradually led to the adoption of the simple method which has ever since proved so successful. On the second Sunday of each month, promptly at half past three o'clock,—the school session proper closing at 4 p.m.,—our Sunday school prayer meeting begins. We have glorious music—a fine piano, an orchestra of fifteen pieces—and hearty singing The superintendent generally invites four persons to lead in prayer, and has them seated on the platform when the meeting begins. Two seasons of prayer, consisting of two brief, earnest, loving prayers each, then, follow. The superintendent, while trusting in divine leadership, leaves nothing to chance. He selects the hymns speaks briefly and pertinently, and guides the meeting by his evident, devout earnestness of heart, rather than by long exhortations. The time consumed is never more than thirty minutes, everything included.

The pervading tone of the service is that of brightness, cheerfulness, spiritual hopefulness, trust in God. The attendance is larger, rather than smaller, on the Sunday of our prayer-meetings One of the most remarkable features of our large school, with an average attendance of about eight hundred, and one that at once attracts the observation of thoughtful visitors, is the presence, in our Bible classes, of two hundred or three hundred young men and women from fifteen to thirty years of age. By these, as indeed by all classes, our prayer-meetings are regarded as an essential element in the life of the school.

As pastor of the church, I have naturally closely studied our school, and noted the influence it exerts upon the church; and I am certain that between eighty and ninety per cent of those joining us on profession of faith have come from this school, and that, among the varied influences tending to bring the scholars to the point of favorable decision for Christ, a conspicuous, if not the very first, place must be given to our Sunday school prayer-meeting. —S. S. Times.

The Teacher Called of God.

Dr. Stalker says plainly that for a preacher there must be a call to the ministry distinct from the experience of personal salvation. "The outer must be preceded by the inner; public life for God must be preceded by private life with God; unless God has first spoken to a man, it is vain for a man to attempt to speak for God." How many teachers lightly and carelessly take up the work of the Sunday school for reasons entirely inadequate to the importance of the task! Some love the social element, some the dignity of office, some are fond of children, some undertake the duties because they are ashamed to do nothing, and this seems the easiest gate of service to slip through. O teacher, stop and ask yourself the question, "Why did I become a teacher?" If the answer does not satisfy you, do not give up your class on a sudden impulse; but think and pray over the matter until you realize the true motive which should impel you to undertake this office, and then with renewed consecration bend to your work.—Mrs. A. F. Shauffler.

Enjoying the Bible.

It is discouraging to some good people to find that they cannot enjoy reading the Bible at all times and under all circumstances. "I can enjoy reading a newspaper at almost any time," says one, "and if the Bible is as dear to me as my paper, I ought to enjoy reading that at almost any time, too" Plausible as it is, the argument is wrong, both in its premise and in its conclusions. It is not true that one can enjoy reading a newspaper at almost any time. One cannot enjoy reading it in the shadow of a great sorrow, for instance. Nor can one enjoy reading it in the middle of a crisis, or when one is at high pressure from any cause. The daily paper is keyed upon the level that a man usually finds himself when at the breakfast table, or in the store waiting for a customer, or after tea, when the cares of the day are to be put away. But even if one can enjoy the daily paper at any time, and can only enjoy reading the Bible at certain times, it is no evidence that his heart is set upon the world, of which the daily paper is the mirror, rather than upon heaven, of which the Bible is the mirror. The Bible is not keyed to a level with ordinary, every day life and thought. It is keyed up to a level with the thoughts which men think when they leave the busy street and go out upon some mountain-top and uncover their heads to the cooling breeze, and look up into the blue veil which separates the holy place into which they have entered from the Holy of Holies. It is just as unreasonable that we should find fault with ourselves for not enjoying the Bible in the midst of the the whirl of business as it would be to find fault with ourselves for not being able to enjoy a humorous story while sitting by the bedside of a dying friend.—Bible Reader.

Others Fail—It Cures!

DEAR SIRS,—From my own experience I can confidently say that Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry possesses true merit. It was the means of saving my little girls life last summer. She was teething and took violent diarrhœa. Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry cured her, and I feel that I cannot say enough in its favor.
MRS. WILLIAM ARTHUR,
Teeterville, Ont.

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MRS. JAS SANDERS,
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There is danger in neglecting a cold. Many who have died of consumption dated their troubles from exposure, followed by a cold which settled on their lungs, and in a short time they were beyond the skill of the best physician. Had they used Bickle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup, before it was too late, their lives would have been spared. This medicine has no equal for curing coughs, colds and all affections of the throat and lungs.

Five minutes spent in the companionship of Christ every morning—aye, two minutes, if it is face to face and heart to heart—will change the whole day, will make every thought and feeling different, will enable you to do things for His sake that you would not have done for your own sake or for anyone's sake. —Drummond.

The greatest preparation for Christian work is being good at home. By being good, I mean being Christlike. The woman at the washtub who keeps her temper is doing a greater thing than I am in addressing this convention.

No Gripe
When you take Hood's Pills. The big, old-fashioned, sugar-coated pills, which tear you all to pieces, are not in it with Hood's. Easy to take and easy to operate, is true of Hood's Pills. Safe, certain and sure. All druggists. 25c.
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LaGrippe Conquered.
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