

OCT. 17 1900

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The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter Lesson 4. Oct. 23, 1900

THE PRODIGAL SON.—Luke 15: 11-24.

Read Luke 15.

Commit Verses 20-24.

GOLDEN TEXT.—I will arise and go to my father.—Luke 15: 18.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Probably in January, A. D. 30.

Place.—Somewhere in Perea.

FATHER AND HOME: THE TWO SONS.—Vs. 11. Here we have a picture of what God meant the world to be. A certain man had two sons. The householder is our Heavenly Father, full of love for his children. All pious and returning sinners are the younger son. All who exhibit the spirit of the elder are the elder son.

THE WANDERING.—Vs. 12, 13.

Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. The older son, according to Jewish law, inherited a double portion. The younger would inherit one third of his property.

But he desired his father to give him his share. His father could do it. The request showed: (1) selfishness; (2) ingratitude; (3) self-will.

(4) a determination to do wrong; (5) undutifulness; (6) narrow vision.

The Spiritual Meaning of the Request. It is the expression of man's desire to be independent of God's control and restraints, and to do as he pleases. He thinks he can be happier thus. And he divided unto them his living. His property, He gave him the opportunity of exercising his free choice. Not many days after the younger son gathered all together. This gathering together of all, and departing, shows the determination of getting all the gratification he can out of the world, the preference of the creature to the Creator. And look his journey. He left father, home, love, duty. Into a far country. Perhaps Rome, or Corinth, or Antioch. The far country is being far from God in character, in motives, in feelings, in works, in sympathy.

THE CONSEQUENCE.—Vs. 13, 16.

The prodigal expected a career of success, a return in triumph. There was a certain amount of intense pleasure at first, the cheer and warmth which come from the flames when first approached, and before they are near enough to turn. Wasted his substance with riotous living. The down grades of life are generally steep and short. His substance was wasted, for he got no corresponding good. He plunged into dissipation and every forbidden pleasure. The worldly life is always a wasteful life. It wastes life and soul. It wastes life and health. And when he had spent all. This seems to have happened very soon; the enjoyment of sin is brief. There arose a mighty famine in that land. His pleasures failed, his money was gone, his seeming friends left him, his conscience tortured him. And he began to want. The soul has many hungers and thirsts. And the world, with its riches and pleasures, can never satisfy the soul. And he went and joined himself. He was, in effect, a slave to a citizen of that country. The boasted freedom of sin soon becomes degrading slavery. Enticed by Satan's pleasures, he becomes Satan's drudge. He sent him into his fields to feed swine. The basest, most degrading work a Jew could do. No one knows what he will do when he enters the paths of sin. He would ruin. So hungry was he. These husks are the pods and seeds of the locust tree, a common evergreen tree bearing abundant fruit, long, curved pods, which are used for feeding cattle, and are exported to England for feeding horses, under the name of locust beans. And no man gave unto him the food he needed. His apparent friends all deserted him.

THE RETURN.—Vs. 17, 20. And when he came to himself. He had been like one out of his head. He is now restored to reason, to the consciousness of his real condition.

How many hired servants. Those least connected with the family; even those have bread enough to spare. The prodigal is moved by hunger. Any motive that actually leads the soul to repentance suffices. I will arise. He resolves to change his course of life. We shall never do better unless we make up our minds to do better. And go. I will put my resolves into action immediately. And go to my father. Because he was his father, and the one against whom he had sinned. I have sinned against heaven. Against the authority and the principles of heaven, against goodness, and providence, and God. And before thee. He had wronged his father. And am no more worthy. He makes no excuses. He humbly confesses his sins. This is a sign of true repentance. Make me as one of thy hired servants. Let me take any place only permit me to come home. The first impulse of the contrite heart is one of humility. And he arose, and came to his father. This actual setting out on the homeward journey is the turning point in a prodigal's life. All that went before would be vain, and all that came after would be impossible without this.

THE WELCOME HOME.—Vs. 20, 24.

When he was yet a great way off. Coming slowly, wearily, in rags, shamed. So the sinner, conscious of his sin, hungering after God and home, is ready to take the lowest place. His father saw him. He was ever watching for his return. And ran. Expressing the intensity of his desire. And kissed him. He was welcomed to his father's heart as a son. The Father came from heaven to Cavalry to meet and welcome his lost son, the human race. The son said unto him, etc. He complains of no one but himself. This was a strong proof of the reality of his repentance. But the father said. Cutting short his confession, since he knew that he was truly penitent. Bring forth the best robe. This represents the robe of righteousness. God does not save men in their sin, but from sin. Their whole life and character must be changed. Put a ring on his hand. The giving of the ring restores him to freedom. The ring, which in the East is always a signet or seal, is the symbol of rank. Shoes on his feet. Shoes were worn only by freemen, never by slaves. The saved sinner is a service of love. Bring hither the fattest calf. Thus the penitent is treated as a distinguished and welcome guest. Let us... be merry. The feast set forth the gladness which reigns over even a single returning penitent. For my son was dead. He had been dead to his home. The inner is dead to the realities of life, to light, and truth, and love of heaven. And is alive again. Has come back to the state of holiness and love for which God made us. Was lost. He is far from home, from his father, from his true life, hungry, pining. God finds him and brings him back. No wonder they were joyful. Their is no joy like that over a returning sinner.

The action of the elder son is given in the remainder of the parable, and by it Christ rebukes the feelings with which the scribes and Pharisees looked upon the welcome he gave to publicans and sinners. Too often their conduct is mirrored still in the conduct of outwardly good people.

THE WORST BOY IN SCHOOL.

There is a lesson for all teachers in this story by Dr. Wayland Hoyt.

Some years ago a boy in Mr. Wamalak's Sunday-school behaved so badly that after trying for many months to get along with him by putting him in different classes the officers and teachers held a meeting to discuss the advisability of expelling the boy.

It is a pity to turn him out in the street again, said the superintendent, but we can't let him break up the school.

Just then a timid, refined girl said, Mr. Superintendent, I wish you would let me try what I can do with Johnny. The superintendent told her he thought it was no use. There are Sister This and Brother That and Elder S-and-so, who have tried everything that possibly could be done to civilize him, and I guess you would not make out any better. Still, he added, if you really want him, I will see that he goes to your class next Sunday.

His new surroundings subdued him slightly the first two Sundays, but after that he misbehaved worse than ever. After school one day the teacher put her arm around him and said:

Johnny, I am going to walk home with you.

Naw, ye ain't said he, pushing her away from him.

Well, then, you walk home with me, she continued.

I wouldn't be caught on the street with you, was his reply.

She endeavored to interest him in some way, but it was all of no avail, and the surly child ended the rather stilted colloquy by spitting in her face.

Even this did not daunt the persistent girl, for, wiping her face on her handkerchief, she made a desperate effort to reach the boy by other means. Taking a visiting card from her pocketbook, she handed it to the boy, saying:

Here is my address, Johnny. Next Wednesday afternoon there will be a package for you at my house. I want you to come and get it.

Wednesday came, and so did Johnny. Snatching the box from the servant who opened the door of his teacher's home in response to his ringing at the bell, he hurried down the steps and into the street without a word of thanks. Stopping in the shade of a big tree a short distance away, he opened the package, and there displayed to his wondering

gaze was a jacket—just his size—a jackknife, and a ball. A little note accompanying the gifts said, Dear Johnny, I love you.

That stroke of diplomacy on the part of his teacher transformed a terror into a model scholar, and today he is an honored and well-known business man in a Western city.

This little story gives the keynote to successful teaching—love. Love, not a love for the work because it is pleasant, honorable, or remunerative, or because the hours are comparatively short, or that, unlike most other occupations, Saturdays are given the teacher for the pursuit of her own will or pleasure, but love for each individual pupil, the bad as well as the good.

Eels at a Quilting Party.

The Rockland (M.) Opinion tells a story of the way in which a quilting party was recently broken up. The ladies were playing their needles and talking in the sitting room of the house where the quilting-bee was held. Meantime the husband and son of the hostess, who had been fishing for eels, returned home. The two men repaired to the kitchen and dumped their heavy catch into the sink. Then, leaving the eels to thaw out in hot water, they repaired to the barn to attend to the cattle. Soon the eels, which had appeared to be frozen stiff and lifeless, began to feel the effect of the warmth and to writhe and twist in the full vigor of life. They dropped out upon the floor and, so to speak, pervaded the room.

The sitting-room by this time had become very warm and some one opened the door leading into the kitchen. Suddenly a lady saw one of the eels, screamed, rose from her chair, and shrieked:

There's a snake!

In an instant the wildest excitement prevailed. A glance into the kitchen, and there was a cry: Oh, the kitchen is full of snakes!

The quilers rushed out into the hall and up the stairs to the dressing-room.

At this juncture the men came in from the barn, and there was some lively work before the eels were slaughtered. The shock and the fright which the ladies had received effectually broke up the quilting party.—Ex.

Where Chinese Gods Are Made.

One of the strangest of the industries in Birmingham, England, is the manufacture of Chinese idols. Looking around the interior of one of the factories in which the deities are made, one is struck with the incongruity of the surroundings. Arranged about in all sorts of attitudes are a number of gods. They are of all sorts and sizes. Some are gods of war—so at least one would conclude from their stern looks and murderous swords. Others are gods of peace and look extremely agreeable fellows. Some cultivate hideous leers, and for all their divinity one instinctively votes them thoroughly nasty. An enterprising Birmingham manufacturer is prepared to supply to order all sorts of gods, and at the most reasonable prices. The cost of a god is usually determined by its size, weight, and workmanship. You may have one as low as twelve dollars. On the other hand, you may, where expense is no object, have one of superior workmanship and size at graduated scales up to five hundred dollars or more. Owing, however, to the present outbreak in China, the manufacture of gods will, it is feared, undergo a slump.—Commercial Advertiser.

The New Church Member.

While the person who has united with the church should have the tenderest nurture, yet, on the other hand, he should not expect too much at the hands of the older members of the congregation. He should remember, first, that they are very fallible, and may neglect their duty and miss the mark in many ways.

Then he should also bear in mind that most of them are busy people, having many cares and duties devolving upon them, so that they cannot always bestow upon others the attention that may be expected.

No person who unites with the church should expect too much of his fellow-members. He should at least try to take care of himself and his own spiritual interests, and should not beguile himself with the expectation of being coddled and petted. It is the duty of all rather to minister to others than to be ministered unto.—Our Young Folks.

A Wakeful Congregation Secured.

During a village service in a church near Saint Ives an amusing incident effecting the rights of citizens to sleep in church took place. In the course of the sermon the preacher stopped, and suddenly requested that some one would

kindly awaken the parish clerk. This semi-ecclesiastical dignitary is in the habit of laying his head upon his arms, burying his nose in his sleeve, and composing himself for a quiet forty winks immediately the discourse commences. A member of the congregation slightly tickled the gentleman with a hymn book, and the clerk then turned round to the parson, nodd-d kindly, and said, Go on, I ain't asleep; I'm listening. This little interlude had the effect of giving the preacher a wakeful attentive congregation.—London Telegraph.

He Won't Stand Peaking.

One day I was being shown through the great Saltire Mills, near Bradford, when I observed a man passing a piece of alpaca cloth over rollers, which enable him to detect any flaws by the reflection of the light from the window. What is he doing? I inquired. Oh, he is 'peaking,' or examining the cloth. You see he has just found a bad place, and he will deduct something for it from the girl's pay. You see, sir, when the cloth is held up to the light, it shows what wasn't seen before! When a man's character isn't what it should be, sir, we say of him, 'He won't stand peaking.'—British Workman.

Teaching the Young Idea.

A Manchester lawyer noticed the other evening that his youthful son, who was studying arithmetic, seemed very restless. Getting impatient, the father broke out:

What on earth ails you? Why can't you keep still? Wriggling about every minute.

It's all your fault, murmured the boy.

Why is it?

'Cos I asked you last night how many a billion was, and you said it was a thundering lot. Teacher asked me the same question to day, and I gave the same reply. That's why I can't keep still.—London Answers.

A Good Distinction.

A well-known bishop was discussing evolution at a reception, much to the delight of a group of ladies who surrounded him. The current of the bishop's remarks was broken in on by a pompous young gentleman who stood by.

It comes to this—that the only distinction I can see between a man and an ape is that the man can speak and the ape can't.

The prelate looked at him a moment, and added: Don't you think, perhaps, that there is also this distinction—that the man knows when to hold his tongue, and the ape doesn't?

The Church Times does not admire the mode of reading the services which it finds adopted by the younger clergy, and gives the following specimen of their general pronunciation:—

Our vicar, a worthy but antiquated gentleman, is fortunately assisted by the cue-bit, fresh from coal-age, and cram full of knowledge. He is a staunch Catholic, a subtle thinker, sound on the Sacraments, a preacher of the terewith, a great student of the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew languages; for, unlike our poor vicar, he always says, Magdalen, cre a-ture. Is rah! and so forth. Oh that his like were found throughout the kingdom! There is something to terewly sacred in his pronunciation, so aloof as it is from the manner of the vulgar tong!

Two Girls were looking after a third who had just passed them with a fragrant mass of violets nestled in her fur trimmed dress. It was a season when violets were very high.

I wonder how it would seem to have all the money one wanted, one said wistfully.

The other was silent a moment. Then she looked up brightly.

I can't have the money, she answered, but I've just made up my mind to one thing: that if I can't have what I'd like, I'll be happy without it. I'm not going to let any girl in the world be happier than I am.—Reformed Church Record.

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