

replied, "I think I can do what you want, for I have some very fine metal, which I will temper so that no man can break it."

He was as good as his word. He made some chains such as had never been made before; the authorities of the prison discarded all the old chains by degrees, and used only those made so cunningly by Louis the Strong.

In course of time the chainmaker—who had committed a treasonable act—was imprisoned and manacled.

"Ah," said he, as he looked at and examined the chains by which he was bound, "I did my work too well! Horror of horrors! these are my own chains, and had I but known I was forging them for myself, how differently would I have made them!"

For the chains that bound him were such as no living man could break, and they were worn by the hands that had made them! Helpless, hopeless—a prisoner in a dungeon, held by chains of his own forging—he was undone!

And we—you and I—may be forging a chain for our own undoing, and which we can never break, in the bad habits, the sins of daily growth, that cling around us. Link by link, our bad habits, our sins, are making the chain which shall hold our souls in a hopeless slavery. Is there no escape?

Yes; let us yield ourselves to God in Christ; let us look to Him for salvation; let us cry to Him, when the shadows of sin approach us, for deliverance, and He will make us free.

—The Pilgrim.

OLD SHOES FOR NEW

M. G. Standley

I will remember a man of God when I was just a young man starting out in the Christian life. So many people thought he was a little off, but he was a man who waited much on the Lord, and did not seem to be much concerned with anything, only that which was a blessing to others and an honour to his God. God so marvellously answered his prayers. He waited, sometimes not just ten or fifteen minutes, but three or four days. I was intrigued by that man's life, by that man's spirit, by that man's example, and felt that I wanted to learn the secret of getting prayers answered, the secret of waiting on God!

In those early days I very frequently attended a little mission here in the city of Cincinnati, and this man attended the same mission. He would mend shoes for poor children. One day a woman came to him sadly in need of a pair of shoes. He told her he would ask the Lord to send them. Shortly after that a woman brought him a pair of shoes, said she had bought them and they did not fit right, and she asked him to give them to some needy one. But now—will you believe it when I tell you—this woman who so sorely needed shoes had to have them specially made, her feet were not mates. The clerk who sold the giver of the shoes gave her shoes that were not mates! Of course a mistake on the clerk's part; but, lo and behold, they were a perfect fit for that poor woman for whom my friend had waited-on-the-Lord and asked Him to supply!

God is just the same! He tells us He is "the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever!" He would have us to bring all our needs and all our cares, cast them at His feet: wait on Him! Yes, I say; "Wait on the Lord," and "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

—Flame.

Sunday School Lesson

June 8, 1947

A. D. Cann

RELIGIOUS REFORMS IN JUDAH

Lesson: 2 Kings 22:10-11; 23:1-5, 21

Golden Text: Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law. Psalm 119:34.

Hezekiah's reign was followed by two wicked kings—Manasseh (2 Kings 21), and Amon his son. The former reigned 55 years and the latter about two years. Manasseh was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. He even went to the extent of building heathen altars in the temple and introducing Baal worship.

RELIGIOUS DECLINE

"And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down." Because Jerusalem had followed all the idolatry of the house of Ahab, it therefore suffered a similar punishment. The scripture says: "Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel." When people turn from their sins to live holy lives and then afterwards turn back to their former sins, their last state is worse than their first. It is like a dog which having eaten poison, spews it up and then afterwards eats it over again. Turning the dish upside down suggests Jerusalem being emptied of its virtues, wealth and inhabitants. Jerusalem is the dish turned upside down until this present day. There is only one way that it can be turned right side up and that is through Bible repentance and reformation.

RELIGIOUS AWAKENING

Religious awakenings attended the reign of Josiah the son of Amon. "And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant." A copy of the book of the law was found while the temple was being cleansed. When it was read in the presence of the king it made a favorable impression on his soul. From childhood the king was good and began to seek after God. As an individual, and in his representative capacity as king he renewed the covenant with God and pledged to keep His commandments. The people stood thus showing their willingness to follow the king in his convictions. The source of influence that turned the young king to righteousness is unknown. Some suggest that he had a godly mother. At any rate it was not the influence of his father or grandfather. The sovereign grace of God can break the laws of heredity.

RELIGIOUS REFORMS

"The king commanded Hilkiyah, the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord the vessels that were made for Baal and for the grove, and for all the hosts of Heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem." It is one thing to read and study God's Word and it is another thing to practice it. To make the covenant effective into which the people had entered would require strenuous work. The young king set himself to the task with determination and perseverance. Idolatry was deeply seated in the nation and would not be easily removed. His first step was to thoroughly purge the temple worship. This was followed by a commandment to keep the Passover. The people obeyed. The king did not confine himself to Jerusalem, but destroyed the altar at Bethel, in what had been the northern kingdom. The reforms were radical, but unfortunately the king was killed be-

fore they became a part of the life of the nation.

June 15, 1947

JUDAH'S LAST DAYS

Lesson: Jeremiah 36:2-3; 28:31; 2 Kings 24:1-4

Golden Text: The fear of the Lord prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. Proverbs 10:27

After the death of Josiah the kingdom of Judah continued for 22 years before the end came. During this time Jehoiakim, who is the subject of discussion in today's lesson, reigned eleven years. He was a wicked king.

THE BOOK PREPARED

"Take thee a roll of a book and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations; from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day." A man's life must be a book before he can write one that is of much spiritual value. Such was Jeremiah. He was a prophet, not just because he foretold future events, but because he listened to God and passed his word along where it was directed, Judah was his starting point, but the standards and judgments he proclaimed concerned the whole world. God's purpose in writing this Book was "that the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." The king was leader and the people followed him in his idolatry and sin. He departed from the ways of his father and did that which was evil in the sight of God. He had ambitious building schemes and like Solomon resorted to forced labor. Jeremiah denounced him for this and for all his oppression, covetousness and shedding innocent blood. Jeremiah 36 is an exhortation to the king and people to turn from their wicked ways and avoid disaster.

THE BOOK DESTROYED AND RE-WITTEN

The book was read by Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe in the temple and later before the princes at their request. The princes were filled with fear and told the king about the book. Jehoiakim ordered the book read in his hearing, and showed his contempt for the writing by cutting it with a knife and then putting it in the fire. His conduct, however, did not get him rid of the word of God. The king's attitude was not unlike the people who blindfolded Jesus. They could not stand to look upon his sinless, holy face and hence they covered it. Sin does not want to be exposed. The irreverent, careless and hostile attitude of many toward God's Word today is not unlike the ancient king of Judah. Let us examine our own hearts and lives and see if we correspond with God's standard. Whatever attitude we take toward the Word does not alter its message in the least. Jeremiah re-wrote his prophecies and reaffirmed their truth. God's Word cannot pass away. It is always the standard of judgment.

THE END OF JEHOIAKIM

"Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim, king of Judah: He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost." It did not pay the king to disregard God's warnings. It never does. Jehoiakim's son occupied the throne for only three months and that was the end of royalty for his house. "He who wishes to hide his crimes, or take away the evidence that is against him, adds thereby to his iniquities, and is sure in consequence to double his punishment."—Dr. Adam Clarke.