

Sunday School Lesson

October 26, 1947

A. D. Cann

RELIGION IN PRACTICE

Lesson: James 1:22-27; 14-20

Golden Text: Faith, if it hath not works, is dead.

The burden of James' Epistle is to expose the fallacy of a sinning religion. At first sight it might appear that he contradicts Paul. Such is not the case. Paul teaches that practising Jewish customs and ceremonies cannot take away sin, but only faith in Jesus Christ. The works which Paul condemns were substituted for justification, while the works of which James speaks are the results of justification. Paul writes of Jewish customs and ceremonies, while James writes of kind deeds, benevolence and christian service in general.

A TEST OF LOVE

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." Obedience is a test of love. Love is regarded by many as a passive quality, inactive, something merely to be enjoyed. James corrects this error. Love is active; a self sacrificing power in life. We practice the word because we love it. When we were born the first time it was of corruptible seed, hence we were dead and inactive so far as the Word of God was concerned. When born again or born the second time, it is of incorruptible seed, hence we are alive and active in doing or practising the Word of God. Some religionists are like they who look in a mirror and then go away to forget all about it. This forgetting the Word may occur even after the beautiful experience of regeneration or entire sanctification, hence the need of constantly taking heed lest we fall.

A TEST OF RELIGION

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." To help people with a Christ like motive is an evidence of pure religion. Our holy religion is greatly dishonored when professors visit the fatherless or widows with a view to taking advantage of their adverse circumstances or for any other unworthy reason. At this season of the year the farmers are harvesting potatoes and unfortunately some of them are spotted with blight. When inspected the largest and best potatoes are condemned, regardless of how good they otherwise may be. To keep pure we must keep separate from the sin and fellowship of the world.

A TEST OF FAITH

"Faith without works is dead." With many church people, faith is only the consent of the mind and God does all the work in the church that needs to be done. A corpse is a very undesirable thing to have around, in fact there is only one place suitable and that is the grave yard. It is inactive, dead and full of corruption. So likewise says James is faith without works.

November 2

CHRISTIAN STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Lesson: James 3:1-6; 4:4-10

Golden Text: Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. Psalm 19:14.

James is reminding us that religion and ethics go hand in hand. His doctrine corresponds with Paul's where he said—"that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." There is a vast difference between adorning and adoring the doctrine. It is possible to adore the doctrine and not practise the corresponding ethics, but if we are to adorn the gospel we will give strict attention to all our conduct.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." The tongue of itself has no moral

quality. It is a piece of flesh, very small in contrast with the rest of the body. To point out this fact James uses three illustrations: (1) Bits for horses. The bit in the horse's mouth is very small in comparison with the rest of the harness, yet it is by this means that the whole body is turned. (2) Helms of ships. The helm or rudder is very small in comparison with the size of the ship. Through the small helm the whole ship is turned and often made to go contrary to the wind. (3) A small fire as a match or cigarette. It is small at the beginning but what a large city or forest it can soon destroy. So, says James, is our tongue among our members. It has great power for good but it also has great power for evil. On the day of Pentecost the tongue of fire became a kind of symbol of the power of speech, when men's hearts and minds were energized by the Holy Spirit. The highest use of the tongue is leading others to Jesus Christ. The tongue energized by the Holy Spirit is God's method of reaching the unsaved.

THE CONTROL OF THE TONGUE

"And the tongue is a fire." The tongue is similar to a fire in that it has power for good when under control and power for evil when out of control. The hell fire of which James speaks is the condition of the tongue in its natural unsaved state. It is good to know that the tongue can be energized by holy fire as well as unholy fire. The control of the tongue or conversation is set forth in the Epistle of Peter. Husbands who do not read the Word or go to church may be won to the Lord by the conversation of the wife. "While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." Yes, our conversation should be such that those who know us best will have confidence in our religion.

CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners: and purify your hearts, ye double minded." We are told that the reason we do not obtain things from God is because we ask for the wrong things and ask in the wrong way. We fight, and war, and kill, in order to get what we want and then are not satisfied. In the first place our asking should be definite and to the point. The sinner should cleanse his hands which means he should straighten up his outward life. The christian should purify his heart which means he should seek inward as well as outward holiness.

A double minded man or a man with a mixed motive is unstable in all his ways. Until that evil motive is confessed it will remain uncleansed. God desires that we be single minded, with a single motive and purpose. When such a motive and purpose becomes the controlling power in our lives then we can accomplish something for God. The Bible tells us that a single evil motive is better than living a double life with mixed motives.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROMOTE REVIVALS?

By Charles G. Finney

It appears to me that we who are ministers, instead of looking abroad and searching for the fundamental difficulty beyond and out of ourselves, should see that whatever else may be an occasion, our own spiritual state is certainly one, if not the primary and fundamental, reason for the decline in revivals. Want of personal holiness, unction, power in prayer and in preaching the Word, want of holy living and consecration to the work, of self-denial, and energetic effort in the ministry—these, no doubt, are the principal reasons why revivals are so few and far between, and of so superficial a character.

Now, my beloved brethren, while this is so, does it not become us to take this home, confess it, bewail it, and first of all understand that whatever else needs to be corrected and set right, we must ourselves repent and re-

ceive a new unction for the work? It is of no use for us to go abroad and search for reasons, while the principal reason lies at our own door. While our hearts are cold, our zeal in revivals abated; while we are turned aside and running here and there to attend conventions, councils, ecclesiastical gatherings; while we are engaged in reading the popular publications of the day, it is no wonder the church is in declension and the world in apostasy.

I think we may rest assured that, unless we are frank enough, humble enough, and honest enough to look the true state of things in the face—unless we confess and forsake our sins, and return to the work and engage in the promotion of revivals—God will undoubtedly rebuke us, will set us aside and will raise up other instruments to do His work; He will alienate the hearts of the people from us, destroy our influence with them, and raise up we know not whom to go forth and possess the land.

Among all the conventions of the present day I have thought that one of a different character might be greatly useful. If we could have a ministerial convention when ministers would gather for prayer, for confessing our faults one to another, for getting into a revival spirit and devising the best ways and means for the universal promotion of revivals throughout the length and breadth of the land, I should rejoice in it. It has seemed to me that of all the conventions of the day, one of this kind might be the most useful.

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR MAN

R. B. Warren

It is unfortunate that so many people have time and appetite to read the lurid, sensational exposures of crime, sex perversion, unhappy marriages, etc., etc., and yet have neither time nor desire for the reading of the Bible. How much better if they would read the Gospels, the four-fold record of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. How interesting it is! How stimulating to better living!

One is impressed by many things but none more than the love of Christ for man. He cared for their physical needs. Once He said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat, and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way." Matt. 15:32. He was touched at the sight of physical suffering. "He was moved with compassion toward them and He healed their sick." Mk 6:34. When He met the widow of Nain whose only son had died, "He had compassion on her, and said unto her, weep not," Luke 7:13. He raised her son to life again.

While Jesus was distressed at the sight of human need and suffering, He was moved yet more deeply by the fact of man's bondage in sin. His love finds its noblest and highest expression in His effort to save man from the curse of sin and restore him to fellowship with God. To do this He went to the Cross and poured out his soul unto death.

O, what wonderful love! How can we slight it? He has provided a glorious deliverance from sin. Let us renounce the spirit of rebellion against god's authority and come to our loving Saviour. He will forgive us. He will break the bonds of sin that bind us. He will set us free. Praise Him for His Compassion and love!