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The Bunday School.

December 10.

Reading and Obeying the Law.

Nehemiah 8:8-18.

Golden Text: Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it. Luke 11:28.

Analysis of the Lesson

The passage before us suggests the following themes:

1. An Ancient Bible School.

2. The Lesson from the Law. 3. The Results of Faithful Teaching.

4. The Application to Modern Times.

An Ancient Bible School

There is a noteworthy and beautiful sequence between the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the public reading and study of the Scriptures narrated in to-day's lesson. Reverent attention to the divine Word is the first and most essential requirement for the happiness and prosperity of any nation.

The Lesson From the Law

Though we do not know just what portion of the Scriptures was read, it is plain that there was time for a considerable section, since the first session lasted six hours-from morning until noon. A further reading of the law on the second day brought before the people specific directions which the Lord had given by Moses for the observance of the Feast of the Tabernacles, which, however, had been wholly neglected.

The Results of Faithful Teaching

The immediate effect of the reading of the law upon the multitude was very marked, and proound grief at first stirred their hearts as they realized their manifold shortcoming in the light of the divine requirements. This feeling was quickly dispelled under the ministrations of the Levites, and the people dispersed to their homes with joy. True repentance works no lasting sorrow, and it was fitting that the people should rejoice in the new ideals revealed in the reading of the Scriptures rather than that they should continue to mourn over their past failings. Obedience to the law followed quickly upon the reading, and the Feast of the Tabernacles was observed with gladness and devotion.

The Application to Modern Times

This lesson affords an opportunity for emphasizing the value of the Bible as a whole. The destructive criticism which is so rife at the present time is a serious menace to the appreciation of God's Word as an entirety. The Bible is a consistent, symmetrical whole, and any theory that tends to disintegrate the unity of the Scriptures also tends to disintegrate the very foundations of the Christian faith.

Class Problems

Every Sunday-school teacher is confronted with problems which must be solved. The following are among the most important and perplexing:

I-The Physical Problem

Numbers.—What number of scholars should the teacher have under his charge? The answer depends upon the facilities for the work. Where classes are massed in one room the maximum should not be more than ten. Where there are separate class rooms, as many as many as can be seated comfortably. The best work is done in small classes where the personal element can

Seating.—The sensible thing to do is to seat the class in two short lines, so that those farthest away can hear and see and be heard and seen easily by the teacher. The teacher should place himself as near as possible to the center of the class and stand rather than sit.

Comfort.—The element of bodily comfort is important. Plenty of light, fresh air, comfortable seats, ease in hearing, are indispensible. Conditions do not always allow these, but the wise teacher secures as much comfort as possible.

Quiet.—Order is heaven's first law in successful teaching. The teacher's quiet manner begets quiet. A loud voiced teacher should be declared a nuisance. Sometimes the superintendent is the maker of disorder. It is an incompetent superintendent or teacher who mixes noise and confusion with the hour sacred to teaching the Word of God.

II-The Problem of Grading.

Authority.-Who shall have the fixing of the scholars in class? Too often the whim of scholar or teacher determines it. The safe way is to have a rule or standard by which classes are to be formed and scholars assigned. The authority to do this is vested in the superintendent, and the

scholar should stay in the class to which he has been assigned.

Age.—The ideal theory of grading a Sunday school is upon the educational basis. Many schools have attempted this, but few have had success. The only practical method of grading is upon a basis of age. Like follows like. The best work is done where scholars of the same

Sex.—Little children may be classed together without regard to sex. Boys and girls from ten years upward need to be put into separate classes. Young men and women in whom are the beginnings of a mutual respect and courtesy may profitably be placed together in class; but even

age, and consequently of the same spirit and

here a wiseteacher is demanded.

temper, are put into the same class.

Conduct.—How a boy or girl behaves has something to do in fixing his place in class. One disorderly boy can wreck an entire class. A teacher may be hopelessly handicapped by having a bad scholar thrust upon him. It is better to isolate the bad, and assign to them the teacher whose tact and patience have been proved.

III-Problem of Attendance.

Tardiness.—Tardiness is the vice of many schools. A tardy scholar or teacher never catches up. If he harmed himself only, it would be bad; but he does greater harm to the school. One reason for tardiness is the inconsiderateness of teacher and superintendent, who hold it of it of little account. In its last analysis it is one of the greatest evils of the Sunday-school. Tardiness can be driven out, but it will be done only when teachers and schools awake to the

Irregular Attendance.—One breeds the other. The teacher or scholar who begins with tardiness will soon not be coming at all. One day's absence may break the teacher's spell. A teacher of poorest ability, in constant attendance, will do more for a school than a theological profes-

sor who comes when he feels like it.

Rewards and Honors.—These have their rightful place. It will depend upon the extent to which they are used, and the method of use. Prize-giving is hartful. A reward should be within the reach of all, and not like the prize for the fortunate only. The "Roll of Honor" should be the limit of reward, and it will mean more to the scholar than gifts and money.

Parental Assistance.—This is a strong factor in bringing about a better attendance. The authority and watchfulness of the father and mother are indispensible to the teacher. He can enlist it upon his side if he will seek diligently after it.

It will often be had for the asking.

IV-The Problem of Training.

There is a difference between training and eaching. The two go together, but training the greater work. It is the neglected work in many schools. A few things in the line of training are suggested:

The General Exercises.—The teacher should train his scholars to take part in the exercises of the school—the singing, the praying, the Scripture reading and other exercises of the school. Why? Because public worship will just what the school trains its scholars to make it.

Church Attendance.—There is a higher obligation upon the children than even Sundayschool going. It is to go to church, to hear the pastor preach, to sit with father and mother, and to form early the habit of church-going. The church, with its stated preaching, is first in divine appointment as a means of grace and knowledge.

Making a Record.—Train every scholar to make a good record in all points of excellence. Let the teacher keep that record and enter each Sunday's standing of each scholar in the class, whether he came on time, had studied the lesson, how he behaved, what he gave, whether he attended the preaching service, etc.

Forming Habits.—The Sunday-school teacher has great opportunity in this respect. There are habits of clean speech, clean reading, parental obedience, helpfulness to others, kindness to inferiors, humainty to brutes, that can be trained into boys and girls easier than grammar and

arithmetic, and far more profitably.

It is proposed to raise a National Memorial Fund to the late Dr. Barnado of £250,000, to be used in paying off certain mortgages and debts in connection with the Children's Home work and in establishing that work on a somewhat more satisfactory financial basis. Dr. Barnado, it may not be generally known, died comparatively a poor man. He served the institution with which his name is associated since its founding in 1866 until 1883 without any remuneration, supporting himself by his medical practice and his writing. Since 1883 he has given his whole time to the work, receiving a salary of £600 a year. He gave not only his time, but also his means, to the great work to which he had consecrated himself.

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