

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson III.—Fourth Quarter, For Oct. 20, 1912.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Mark vii, 24-30; Matt. viii, 5-13—Memory Verses 27, 28—Golden Text, John vi, 27—Commentary by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

The two incidents of these lessons, though far separated as to the time of their occurrence, are both illustrations of great faith on the part of two people who were not of Israel—forebodings, no doubt, of the time when blessing shall go from Israel and her righteous king to all other nations, as set forth in Pa. lxxvii and many other places in such wonderful words as these, "God be merciful unto us and bless us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations," and meantime contrasting the "little faith" or "no faith" of Israel with the "great faith" of those of lesser privilege.

The story of the woman of Tyre and Sidon follows in the regular order of events, while that of the Roman centurion takes us back to a time just after the choosing of the twelve apostles. Both events are recorded by Matthew; the centurion also in Luke vii and the gentle woman in Mark in the lesson of today. The great words in each lesson are, to my mind, "O woman, great is thy faith, and it is unto thee even as thou wilt," and "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. * * * Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (Matt. xv, 28; viii, 10-13).

Taking the story of the centurion first, we note that his servant, who was dear unto him, was sick unto death, and the messengers who came to Jesus on his behalf spoke of the centurion's love for the nation and how he had built them a synagogue; but the centurion himself said, either personally or by his messengers, that he was not worthy to have the Lord Jesus come under his roof, but that if He would only speak the word his servant would be healed. When the messengers returned to the centurion's house they found the servant whole that had been sick. He had been healed in the same hour that Jesus had said, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

As Jesus commended the centurion's faith He said to the people that many would come from all parts and share the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, while many who supposed they were sure of it would find themselves cast into outer darkness. How essential it is that we become in God's way His children and know that our names are written in heaven (Luke x, 20; Rev. xx, 15; xxi, 8), for many who profess to be His will have to hear Him say, "I never knew you, depart from Me" (Matt. vii, 21-23). Mark the poverty of spirit of the centurion, no self conceit or consciousness of the importance of his position, but evidently from his heart, "Lord, I am not worthy." Some thing of the spirit of him of Luke xviii, 13, 14, who went to his house justified. There is only one who is truly worthy and when we take our right place before Him He is ready to honor all the faith we place in Him.

As to the other incident I have often thought that Jesus went away off there to be refreshed by that woman's great faith, for knowing all things He knew all about her and her trouble, and the way she would come to Him and cling to Him and take no denial. Nothing pleases Him like faith, and without faith it is impossible to please Him. It is written that the centurion's servant was dear unto him, but here it is a mother pleading for her own daughter who must have been dear to her, and specially dear because of her affliction, for the sick one in a home generally has the sympathy of all. As we think of those who are dear to us do we consider the words of our Father in heaven concerning His only begotten Son, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?" (John iii, 16; Matt. iii, 17; xvii, 5). Let us also lay to heart that we do not honor the Father unless we honor the Son; and that since God spared not His own Son He will with Him also freely give us all things (John v, 23; Rom. viii, 32).

Probably this distressed mother did not know these great truths, but she knew that she had a greatly afflicted daughter, she had heard of this wonderful teacher who could heal all diseases and cast out demons and had no doubt longed to reach Him, but He was too far away, and so her case seemed hopeless. But now He had come near to her, the blessing was within her reach, and as soon as possible she is at His feet beseeching Him for her daughter. To get the complete record, we must put the accounts in Matthew and Mark side by side. To her first appeal Jesus answered her not a word.

The disciples besought Him to send her away. He then said that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She first cried unto Him as the Son of David, now she says, "Lord, help me." To this He replied, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs." Then came her conquering appeal, "Yes, Lord, yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." Willing to own herself a gentle dog pleading for a crumb, she gets all she came for. "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." In each of these cases note the extreme weakness and lowliness of the applicants.

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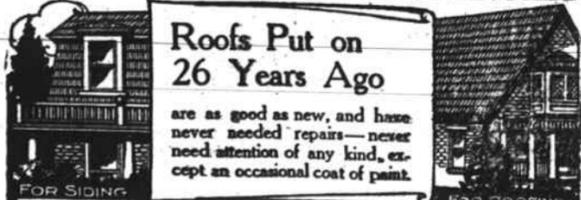
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