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SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson VIII.—First Quarter, For
Feb. 22, 1914.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Luke xii, 1-12. Memory Verses, 9, 9—Golden Text, Luke xii, 8—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

He had in our last lesson spoken of the Pharisees as not only having a mere outward religion, but also of being one with their ancestors in persecuting and killing the prophets, and He had accused the lawyers of not only refusing the truth themselves, but of keeping it from others. Now He says to His disciples, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." As matters were consummating and the crisis approaching. He was speaking more pointedly concerning some things.

All the wrong will be manifest in due time, and the right will prevail, so that it is wise to live always in the sight of the Lord and seek in all things His approval (1 Cor. iv, 3; 11 Tim. ii, 15). He had said on a previous occasion, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees and of Herod," but they were so dull that they thought that He referred to all three and not to false doctrine (Matt. xvi, 6-11; Mark viii, 15).

There is more need than ever to beware of false teachers and teaching, for formalism and rationalism and worldliness are ever increasing. The Pharisee was all for form and outward show, even though professing to believe some things. The Sadducee had no use for anything supernatural, while Herod, though somewhat religious, preferred the sinful pleasures of this world (Acts xxiii, 8; Mark vi, 20).

There is no place in the Bible where leaven ever signifies anything good. In Lev. vii, 13; xxiii, 17, where leaven was commanded to be offered, it represented sin in us and in our service, as is explained in Amos iv, 5, margin. In the parable in Matt. xiii, 33, it refers to the corruption of the food given in the churches in this age of "the mysteries of the kingdom," which is set forth in the parables of the sower, the tares, the mustard tree and the leaven. We are rapidly approaching the time of the oven and the burning.

If we receive the word of God simply and heartily we shall know something of the hatred of the religious world (John xvii, 14), even unto persecution and death (Rev. i, 9; ii, 10; xii, 17), but our Lord teaches us that the death of the body is not a serious matter if we are truly His, for it will mean for the believer real gain and something very far better than remaining here (Phil. i, 21, 23). Therefore we are not to fear it (verses 4, 7; Matt. x, 28). He who cares for sparrows will surely care for His own redeemed ones, so that we may be as brave as Daniel's friends if we have faith in God. The unsaved have every reason to fear death, for to them it will mean the torment of Luke xvi, 22, and finally the lake of fire (Rev. xx, 14, 15).

A true child of God is one who, seeing himself to be a sinner, has pleaded guilty and cast himself upon the mercy of God in Christ, receiving Jesus Christ as his own personal Saviour, putting all his trust in the precious blood shed for him on Calvary. Thus one is able to say, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God" (Rom. v, 1). None others are children of God, according to the Scriptures.

Now, while God needs no evidence of our sincerity in this apart from our faith, for He reads the heart, it is necessary that in about some evidence of our faith, for they can only see faith as it is manifest in the lives and the works of believers, according to Eph. ii, 10; Tit. iii, 8; hence that other saying about confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus and showing faith by works (Rom. x, 9, 10; Jas. ii, 24). There are those who walk in the outward life as Christians, but who mind earthly things and are the enemies of the cross of Christ. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him (Phil. iii, 18, 19; Tit. i, 16).

It is not for us to judge them or to say that they are or are not thus and so. He will see to that. But we may judge ourselves and consider well if our faith in Christ is real and our life corresponding in any measure thereto. That there is a possibility of being saved and yet unwarded is plainly taught in I Cor. iii, 11-15.

The last verse of our lesson is a great comfort to those who are willing to confess with their mouth, as well as to such as may suddenly be placed in a difficult position. Nothing can take the place of reliance upon the Holy Spirit both as our teacher and our utterance. I have in my mind along with verse 12 the comfort of Ex. iv, 12; Jer. i, 7-9; Prov. xxii, 18, and have proved the reality of this comfort times without number.

As to the sin against the Holy Spirit which hath no forgiveness, I understand it to be the persistent rejection of the voice of the Spirit until the heart becomes so hardened and the ears so dull of hearing that His voice is heard no more. Those who fear that they have committed this sin are the very ones who have no cause to fear it, for the very fact of their fear shows that the Spirit is still dealing with them.

Those who have committed this sin are so hardened and rebellious that they cannot be approached on the matter of their souls' welfare. They will not listen to it.

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