

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By HAROLD L. LINDQUIST, D. D. GOLDEN TEXT—But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—II Peter 3:18.

Lesson for October 18

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GROWTH IN CHRIST

LESSON TEXT—John 3:3-8; II Peter 3:18. GOLDEN TEXT—But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—II Peter 3:18.

Growth is a normal thing. We expect it of the child, and when it fails we know that something is wrong. Just so there is something very decidedly wrong in the life of the Christian who fails to grow in grace.

Unless we meet the tragedy of arrested development we need have no concern about the fact that a child will grow physically, mentally and spiritually. The Lord has placed in the babe in a mother's arms the potential qualities of the man or woman to come.

The qualities in a boy or girl which will count gloriously for God may be dreadfully effective for Satan if we permit him to get control of our children.

While it is true that we can do more for the guidance of physical and mental growth than spiritual (because that is a matter of the grace of God), we can lead the steps of the little child to the house of God; we can teach him to pray and to trust God, and we can set an example of godly living before him.

II. Normal Christians Will Grow (II Pet. 1:1-8).

In Christ there are "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." There is no need of some added excitement, or some new and striking achievement, for all the unbelievable great possibilities of Christian grace and growth are in Him.

We have, in practice, so far departed from the normal in Christian life that we can hardly believe that the above is true. In place of the normal Christian life according to God's standard, we have established a standard based on the average Christian life.

III. Forsaking All for Christ (Phil. 3:7-11).

There were a number of things in the life of Paul as a natural man of which he was justifiably proud, but which in the light of his relationship to Christ paled into insignificance.

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Lesson for October 11

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LOYALTY TO CHRIST

LESSON TEXT—Mark 3:14-17; John 8:12. GOLDEN TEXT—But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—II Peter 3:18.

Loyalty is undoubtedly one of the finest traits of mankind. Because of its strength, its fidelity to duty, its unflinching devotion to principle, it is the strength which has made man play upon man's loyalty, making it serve evil and ignoble ends.

All this does not change the fact that there is a high and holy impulse in man to stand true to the right; and in the Christian, to be found ever loyal to the Christ, whose we are and whom we serve. Faith in Christ (our lesson of last week) is rightly followed by loyalty to Him. It manifests itself in three ways.

Without obedience there is no use talking about loyalty. When Jesus said: "Follow me," Matthew (Levi) arose and followed. He was a sinner (v. 17), a man of the despised calling of tax-gatherer (v. 14), but he was ready for the call of Jesus.

Notice also that following Christ carries with it the privilege and obligation (it is both) of making Him known to our friends. Matthew did not wait until he had made a new circle of friends and then invite them to a feast. He celebrated his entrance upon the new life of faith by a friendly and effective testimony before his friends who were publicans and sinners.

Notice the words of Jesus in verse 17. It is not good people, satisfied in their own self-righteousness, who get to heaven. It is sinners, saved by grace, who will there magnify the Saviour's name.

It is one thing to begin, but quite another to persevere in well doing. Jesus had been doing many miracles and a host of followers had flocked to Him. He had not only done great deeds, but had spoken beautiful words, about the Fatherhood of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, etc. He had fed the five thousand, and they liked that too.

How perfect a picture of the "religious experience" of multitudes of men and women in our day. The true disciple, however, stands true in just such an hour. "We believe," said Peter, and he spoke better than ever before in his life. "We don't understand everything (that's the thought back of 'To whom shall we go?'), but we believe, and we will stand fast." Blessed word of loyalty!

Observe that Peter and his brethren recognized Christ as the "Holy One of God," that is, God's Son in a unique and intimate sense, one close to and participating in the holiness of God. Loyalty will not hold on any lesser concept of Christ. There is no incentive to real service and sacrifice in the watered-out religious faith of the modernistic liberal.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim. In the light of His glory and grace.

However, that experience of Paul's was only the beginning of a life of devotion to the Lord, which is expressed in words of the depth of which we cannot fully plumb. What does it mean to know "the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made comfortable unto His death?" We do not fully know, but certain we are that it speaks of a fellowship with Christ that is very deep and intimate; a life of power, because He lives in and works through the believer; a sharing with Him of the hatred and bitterness of the world, yes, of death, if need be, for Him, in the assurance of resurrection.

This is an "all out" Christian experience, nothing held back, nothing thought to be too difficult or trying—everything gladly given in unfeigned love and devotion to Christ. Now the Christian church is languishing for the want of those who will forsake all to follow Him in complete faithfulness.



CHAPTER XIV

It was after the day when she had met Evans in the Glen that Jane began to be haunted by ghosts. There was a ghost who wandered through Sherwood on moonlight nights, a haunting, beating ghost who said, "You're mine, Jane. I must have my daily tip of you."

Well, she was having her punishment. She had not loved him when he needed her. And now that she needed him, she must not love him. Towne was aware of a difference in her when he returned from New York. She was more remote. A little less responsive. Yet these things caused him no disquiet. Her crisp coolness had always constituted one of her great charms.

"Oh, it won't be. I adore babies." His quick jealousy flared. "I don't," he said, with a touch of sulkenness. "I'm not fond of children."

He was like a repentant boy. She made herself smile at him. "I think you are very patient, Mr. Towne." "I am not patient. I am most impatient. And when are you going to stop calling me Mr. Towne?"

"When I can call you—husband." "But I don't want to wait until then, dearest."

"Did you?" She was demure. "I might say 'my love,' like the ladies in the old-fashioned novels." He laughed delightedly. "Say it."

"They are asking a lot of his friends. It is his wife's introduction to his old crowd. Much will depend on whether you and Edith will accept. And it was Edith who asked me to—make you come—"

"Ask me, prettily, and I'll do it." "Really?" She laughed, blushed and did it. "Will you go—ray love?" "Could I say 'no' to that?" He radiated satisfaction. "Do you know how charming you are, Jane?"

"Oh, Mrs. Laramore and Eloise Harper and a lot of others. Lucy says she'll be like a fish out of water, but Delafeld has made up his mind that his friends think that he's ashamed of her."

towne. I could see my little lads. That was the kind of thing to live for, to live with. Ideas. Effort. She had always known it. Yet for a moment, she had forgotten. Had thought of herself as—Curlylocks.



That was the kind of thing to live for.

She went on feverishly with the packing of her shabby suitcase. She rather gloried in its shabbiness. At least it is mine own, was her attitude of mind.

Briggs was not to come for her until four in the afternoon. She decided to go over to Castle Manor and talk to Mrs. Follette. She would take some strawberries as an excuse. The strawberries in the Castle Manor garden were never as perfect as those which Jane had planted. Evans said it was because Jane coasted things into rosiness and roundness. But Jane had worked hard over the beds, and she had her reward.

Carrying a basket, therefore, of red and luscious fruit, Jane went through the pine grove along the path that led to the Castle Manor. Under the trees was a green light which she breathed as one breathes the cool waters of the sea. Her breath came quickly. In a few short weeks she would be far away from this sweet and silent spot, with its sacred memories.

Leaving the grove, she passed the field where the scarecrow reigned. She leaned on the fence. With the coming of spring, the scarecrow had been decked in gay attire. He wore a pink shirt of Evans' and a pair of white trousers. His hat was of straw, and as he danced in the warm south breeze he had an air of care-free jauntness.

Jane found herself resenting his jaunty air. She felt that she had applied him better in his days of appealing loneliness. She had resented, in like manner, the change in Evans. He, too, had an air of making a world for himself. She had no part in it, apparently. She was in effect, the Peri at the gate!

His interests seemed now to include everything but Jane. He was doing many things for the boys of Sherwood, there was his work in town, the added responsibility he had assumed in the affairs of the farm.

"She's such an old darling, Jane. Doing it with her duchess air. But she's not strong. I'm trying to make her let things go a bit. But she's so proud of her success. I wish you could see her showing Edith Towne and her fashionable friends about the dairy. With tea on the lawn afterward. You must come over and join in the fun, Jane."

"I am coming," Jane had told him, "but my days have been so filled."

He had known who had filled them. But he had ignored that, and had gone on with his subject. "The idea I have now is to keep bees and sell honey. The boys and I have some boxes on bee culture. They are quite crazy about it."

It was always now the boys and himself. His mother and himself. And once it had been himself and Jane! Jane found Mrs. Follette on the wide porch. She was snowy and crisp in white linen. She wore a black enamel brooch, and a flat black hat which was so old-fashioned that it looked on a mid-Victorian staidness.

Jane clasped her hands together. "Oh, I want my mother. I want my mother." Her voice was low, but there was a poignant note in it. Old Mary came out with the tray, and when she had gone, Mrs. Follette said, "Now tell me what's troubling you?"

"I'm afraid." "Of what?" "Oh, of Mr. Towne's big house, and—I think I'm a little bit afraid of him, too, Mrs. Follette."

"Why should you be afraid?" "Of the things he'll expect of me. The things I'll expect of myself. I can't explain it. I just—feel it." Mrs. Follette, pouring ice-cold milk from a silver pitcher, said, "It is a case of nerves, my dear. You don't know how lucky you are."

"Am I lucky?" wistfully. "Of course you are lucky. But all girls feel as you do, Jane, when the wedding day isn't far off. They wonder and wonder. It's the newness—the—"

"Laying flesh and spirit . . . in his hands . . ." Jane quoted, with quick-drawn breath. "I shouldn't put it quite like that," Mrs. Follette said with some severity; "we didn't talk like that when I was a girl."

"Didn't you?" Jane asked. Well, I know you were a darling, Mrs. Follette. And you were pretty. There's that portrait of you in the library in pink.

"I looked well in pink," said Mrs. Follette, thoughtfully, "but the best picture that was ever done of me is a miniature that Evans has." She buttered another slice of bread. She had no fear of growing fat. She was fat, but she was also stately and one neutralized the other. To think of Mrs. Follette as thin would have been to rob her of her duchess role.

Jane had not seen the miniature. She asked if she might. "I'll get it," said Mrs. Follette, and rose. "Can't I do it?" "No, my dear. I know right where to put my hand on it."

She went into the cool and shadowy hall and started up the stairs, and it was from the shadows that Jane heard her call. There was something faint and agitated in the cry, and Jane flew on winged feet.

Mrs. Follette was holding on to the stair-rail, swaying a little. "I can't go any higher," she panted; "I'll sit here, my dear, while you get my medicine. It's in my room on the dresser."

Jane passed her on the stairs, and was back again in a moment with the medicine, a spoon, and a glass of water. With her arm around the elder woman she held her until the color returned to her cheeks.

"How foolish," said Mrs. Follette at last, sitting up. "I almost fainted. I was afraid of falling down the stairs."

"Let me help you to your room," Jane said, "and you can lie on the couch—and be quiet—"

"I don't want to be quiet, but I'll lie on the couch—if you'll sit there and talk to me." So with Jane supporting her, Mrs. Follette went up the rest of the flight, and across the hall—and was made comfortable on a couch at the foot of her bed.

"Perhaps I can tell you where to find the miniature," Mrs. Follette said, as Jane fanned her; "it is in Evans' desk set back under the row of pigeonholes. You can't miss it, and I want to see it."