

Business Directory

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson for December 9
Golden Text.—Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.—Psa. 33:12

The Lesson as a Whole
Christians are strangers and pilgrims in this scene (1 Pet. 2: 11) whose "citizenship" is in Heaven, as the word rendered "conversation" in Philippians 3: 20 should be translated. They do not belong to this world, but have been delivered from this present evil age by the cross of Christ (Gal. 1: 4) through which the world has been crucified unto them and they unto the world (Gal. 6: 14). Nevertheless, such cannot rightfully ignore certain responsibilities which are theirs because of the nation into which they were born, or in which they live and whose privileges and protection they enjoy. Paul claimed his Roman citizenship when on two different occasions he was about to be dealt with contrary to the law of the empire (Acts 16: 37-39; 22: 25). We are, therefore, to render unto God the things that are God's and to Caesar (or government) the things that are Caesars' (Matt. 22: 21). We are to live exemplary lives (1 Pet. 2: 13-16) doing good unto all men so far as we can (Gal. 6: 10), honoring magistrates (Rom. 13: 1-4), paying our lawful taxes, and seeking the welfare of the nation to which we belong. Moreover, we are responsible to pray for all men—but specially for those in authority—and to put our influence on the side of law and order. But it is folly to talk of Christian nations. There never has been a Christian nation. There are none today. The number of Christians in any nation is comparatively small. But they are the salt that preserves the whole from complete corruption, and the light that keeps from utter darkness. The more faithful we are to our rejected Lord, the more useful we shall be in the sphere in which our lot is cast. It is the separated Christian who counts most for God in any nation.

VERSE BY VERSE

Matt. 5: 13.—"Ye are the salt of the earth." Salt preserves from corruption. The disciples of our Lord are left in the world to witness against its iniquity and to set an example of righteousness. Savourless salt, like inconsistent Christians, is good for nothing.

Verse 14.—"Ye are the light of the world." Christ so designated Himself, as long as He was in this scene (John 9: 5). In His absence His disciples are to witness for Him as lights in this dark world (Phil. 2: 15). The light manifests the evils that are hidden in the darkness (Eph. 5: 13).

Verse 15.—"On a candlestick...."

it giveth light unto all that are in the house." One who professes to be a follower of Christ, but who hides his light under a bushel—that is obscures his testimony by an over occupation with the affairs of this life—makes no real impression for good upon his community; but one who lives consistently and is out and out for Christ shines as a lamp on a stand, enlightening the whole house.

Verse 16.—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." Mere profession is not enough. The life should speak for God. As we live Christ before men, we let our light shine. Thus they recognize our good works and see in them an evidence of sincerity. So they glorify God by recognizing the reality of His work in the souls of those who are faithful in their witness and behaviour. For we need to remember we do not let our light shine by mere profession, but as it was said of our Lord Himself, "the life was the light of men" (John 1: 4). So it is a devoted, faithful life that gives light to others.

Verse 17.—"It hath been said: that is, in the law given through Moses. There Israel was commanded, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour. Many would narrow this to love for those of one's own friendly circle. The Lord Jesus Christ declared it must embrace all men.

Verse 18.—"I say unto you." He spoke One with divine authority. "Love your enemies." No matter how badly others treat us, we are to seek to do them good. We are to bless when they curse, to be kind even though they manifest hatred, to pray for them even when they persecute and seek to injure us. This is the grace of God in action, as seen in the lives of surrendered believers who are dominated by the Spirit of Christ. Does this seem too high a standard for sinful men to attain? It is. But a regenerated man can do what is impossible for the natural man.

Verse 19.—"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." The nature of the Father is reproduced in those who are His children by new birth. The same consideration for all men that He has will be manifested in them as they are controlled by His Spirit and obey His Word.

Verses 46 and 47.—"Do not even the publicans the same?" The publican was despised by the Jews because he was himself a Jew who had sold out to the Romans that he might become a farmer of taxes and enrich himself at the expense of his own people. Yet even these despised grafters (to us a modern term) loved and honored their own intimate friends and relatives. Is the disciple of Christ to live on no higher plane than they? Perish the

thought!

Verse 48.—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father is perfect." That is, perfect in the sense of impartial. Just as God our Father gives sunshine and rain to good and evil alike, so we are to seek to bless and help those who hate us, as well as those who act kindly toward us.

Verse 2: 13.—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." The Christian should be careful to obey the laws of the land in which he lives. Whatever form of government may prevail, so long as it is recognized as the constituted authority of the country, he is to be in subjection, whether to a king or by whatever name the supreme executive is known.

Verse 14.—"Governors for the punishment of evildoers." All human government manifests imperfection, but without its restraints society would be shipwrecked and anarchy would prevail. In principle, all constituted authority is intended to prevent crime and encourage honesty and good living.

Verse 15.—"With well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Daniel is a good example of this (Dan. 6: 4). There have not been wanting evilly disposed men in all ages, who have sought to impugn the motives and malign the conduct of God-fearing people. The best answer to all this is a blameless life, and this involves obedience to law.

Verse 16.—"As free but, as servants of God." Note the vivid contrast here. Those who, through grace, are free from the slavery of sin and free from the principle of legality in Christian service are, nevertheless, the bondmen of God,

purchased with the precious blood of Christ, and so responsible to render glad, loving obedience to His Word. They are not to make their liberty an excuse for fleshly license.

Verse 17.—"Honour all men." No man is to be despised. All are among those for whom Christ died. "Love the brotherhood." This refers, not to the world in general, but to those who have been saved out of the world — those born again into the family of God. "Fear God." Reverence Him whom we now know, not only as Creator, but as Redeemer. "Honour the king." Show due respect to the head of the government as one set by God in that very place, who is therefore accountable to God for the right exercise of the authority committed to him.

The Heart of the Lesson
Those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ are left in this scene to witness for Him and to make known His grace toward those who still belong to the world. They are to seek the good of all men. In doing this, they will often be misunderstood, and will be subject to cruel persecutions and vindictive treatment. But they are not to retaliate in kind, but by manifestation of the Spirit of Christ are to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12: 21) showing themselves to be law-abiding citizens.

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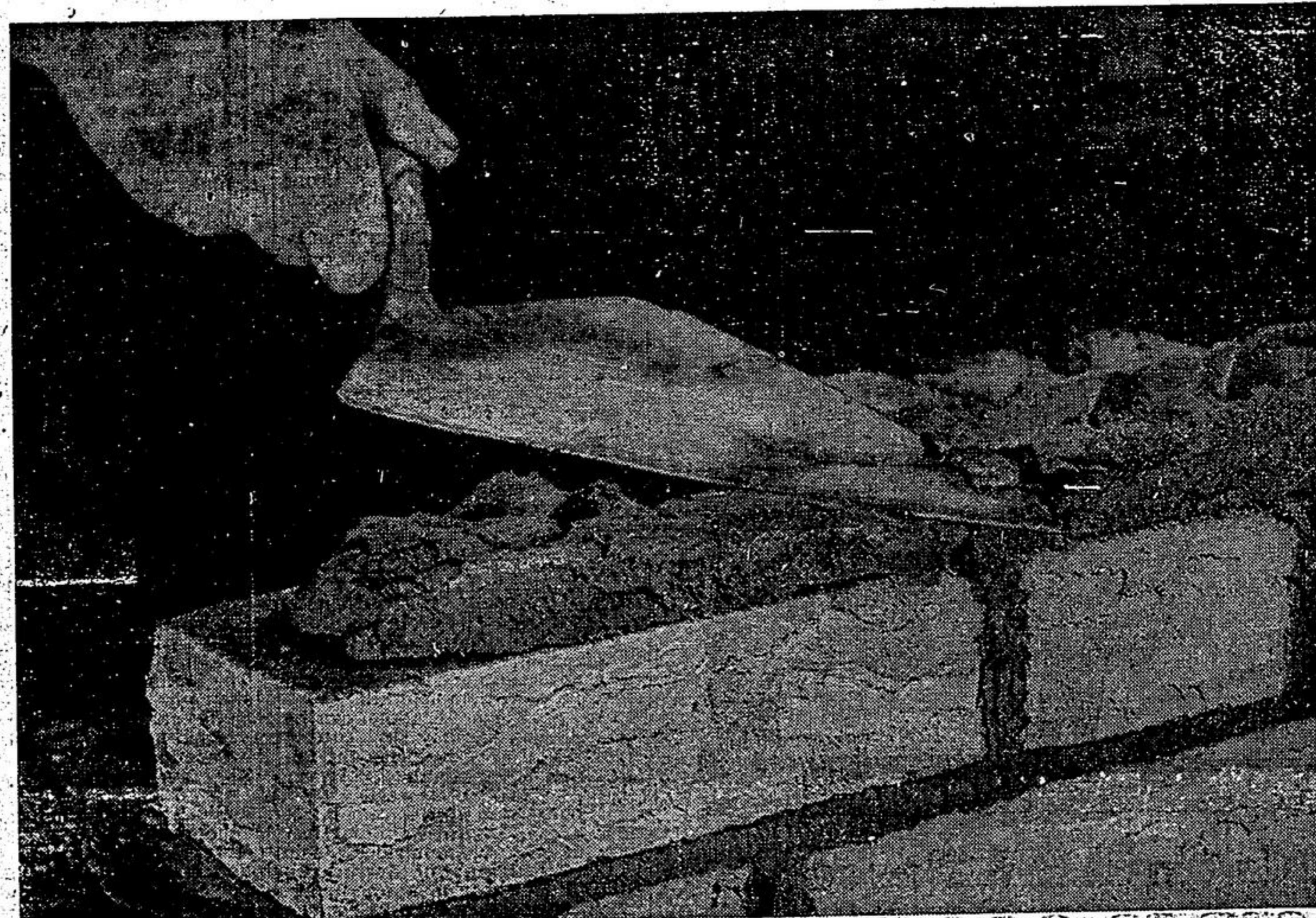
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