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## SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson for July 20

Golden Text.—Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. 2:3

The Lesson as a Whole

The poetical part of this Book begins with chapter 3 and goes on to chapter 42:6. In this great drama we have Job in controversy with his three friends, who insist that God does not permit a righteous man to suffer, but that affliction is the portion of the wicked only; therefore, Job's case implies that God is dealing with him because of some sin or sins, open or secret, which the patriarch cannot or will not acknowledge. When the friends fail to convince him of wickedness, Elihu appears "to speak on God's behalf" and shows that suffering is not necessarily punishment for sins actually committed, but may often be chastening or discipline in order to bring man to a deeper realization of his own impotence, as also to emphasize men's littleness and ignorance and to magnify the greatness and wisdom of God. This the Lord Himself enlarges upon when He speaks to Job out of the storm, with the result that the heart of the sufferer is bowed in reverence and repentance before Him.

Verse by Verse

Job 1:8.—"Hast thou considered my servant Job?" This was God's challenge to Satan, the accuser of the brethren. What charge could he possibly bring against a man so blameless in life, and upright in character? In reply Satan practically declared that Job served God only because of the blessings bestowed upon him, and he declared that if these were taken away, Job would curse God. But the permitted test proved the contrary.

Chap. 2:7.—Satan smote Job with sore boils. This was evidently a very painful and terrible disease, in that the entire surface of the body was covered with filthy abscesses, discharging continually. Some think it was a form of elephantiasis, an Oriental disease which causes great distress and deformity. Satan had taken all Job's children and his possessions away, but the patriarch had not wavered in his devotion to God. Now he sought by personal suffering to shake his faith and turn him against the Lord.

Verse 8.—"He sat down among the ashes." Scraping the filthy discharge from his sores, the afflicted man left his house and found refuge on the ash heap. It was a picture of utter wretchedness and misery.

Verse 9.—"His wife (said) unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." No doubt, the poor woman was so troubled by her husband's affliction that she had come to believe God had forsaken him. Why should he not then renounce God, and so by death bring his anguish to an end?

Verse 10.—"Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not also receive evil?" Job refused his wife's suggestion and affirmed his confidence in the goodness and wisdom of God. He recognized the truth that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28), even though these

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words were not written until some two millenniums later.

Chap. 19:17.—"I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard." After the cruelly unjust charges of his friends had caused him intense mental suffering in addition to his physical anguish Job was in perplexity because there did not seem to be any answer from God when he cried out for vindication and for deliverance.

Verse 8.—"He hath set darkness in my paths." There was no explanation that accounted for his suffering. All seemed to be darkness and confusion. How many of God's saints have suffered thus! But God's heart was toward them still and He was but working out His own purpose of grace, though they realized it not.

Verse 9.—"He hath taken the crown from my head." Job, formerly able to rise above his pains and bereavements, now felt as though he were utterly defeated, so great was his perplexity.

Verse 10.—"Mine hope hath he removed like a tree." He reached up his hands toward heaven, but there seemed to be nothing to which he could cling. Yet God was for him still, though in his intense anguish he could not seem to rise up to Him.

Chap. 42:1.—"Job answered the Lord." The Lord has been speaking to Job, reminding him of man's ignorance and lack of understanding, and of God's infinite wisdom and care for His creatures. Now Job's mind is cleared of the fog of perplexity that had enveloped it and he addresses the Lord in a subdued and penitent spirit, ashamed to think he had ever doubted God's concern for him.

Verse 2.—"I know that thou canst do everything." It is a confirming of the divine omnipotence. He adds, "No thought can be withholden from thee": the recognition of the divine omniscience.

Verse 3.—"I uttered that I understood not." In response to God's challenge (in chap. 38:2) he acknowledges he had, in his deep grief and bewilderment, spoken unadvisedly.

Verse 4.—"I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me." He was ready now to be taught of God and to put aside mere human reasoning.

Verse 5.—"Now mine eye seeth thee." Job had known of God for years. Now he knew God Himself in a new way. The blessed result is given in verse 6 which, unfortunately, is not included in the printed lesson. As he gazed by faith upon the infinitely holy and blessed One, he abhorred himself and repented of all his doubts and misapprehensions, even as he confessed already in chapter 40:4, 5.

Jas. 5:11.—"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." That end was reached when the patriarch acknowledged his own limitations and repented of ever having questioned His love and wisdom.

The Heart of the Lesson  
Though God's ways with His people are often perplexing and baffling to human reason, we may be assured that He will justify Himself at last. If we never understand the reasons for many of His dealings with us here on earth, all will be clear when we stand eventually in His presence, in the full blaze of resurrection glory. Till then faith can afford to wait, knowing that infinite wisdom cannot err, and that all the sufferings of this present life will be repaid abundantly with bliss eternal. This was Job's confidence even when his distress was so deep that he seemed to be overwhelmed in a sea of trouble and false accusation.

## BIBLE QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Q.—Please explain what is meant by Ecclesiastes 7:16; "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?"

A.—Solomon evidently speaks here of a fanatical self-righteousness, also of presumptuous self-wisdom. This all leads to destruction. The fear of God will keep a man from this fatal experience; as we read in verse 18 of this same chapter: "It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand; for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."

Q.—I have heard some teach that Christians, being justified by faith, are not to keep God's commandments. Is this true?

A.—The apostle Paul answered this question in Romans 3:31: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." If faith establishes the law, it does not abolish it. The law of God points out sin, Roman 7:7: "I had not known sin, but by the law." In fact, if there were no law, there would be no sin. Romans 4:15; "Where no law is, there is no transgression." God's law cannot save a man from sin, but it drives him to a Saviour who can save him, because sin is the transgression of the law. (1 John 3:4.) It is faith in Christ that brings us to salvation through His atoning blood so that we are justified or made in harmony with the law by faith, Christ's perfect life and righteousness are accepted in place of our sin.

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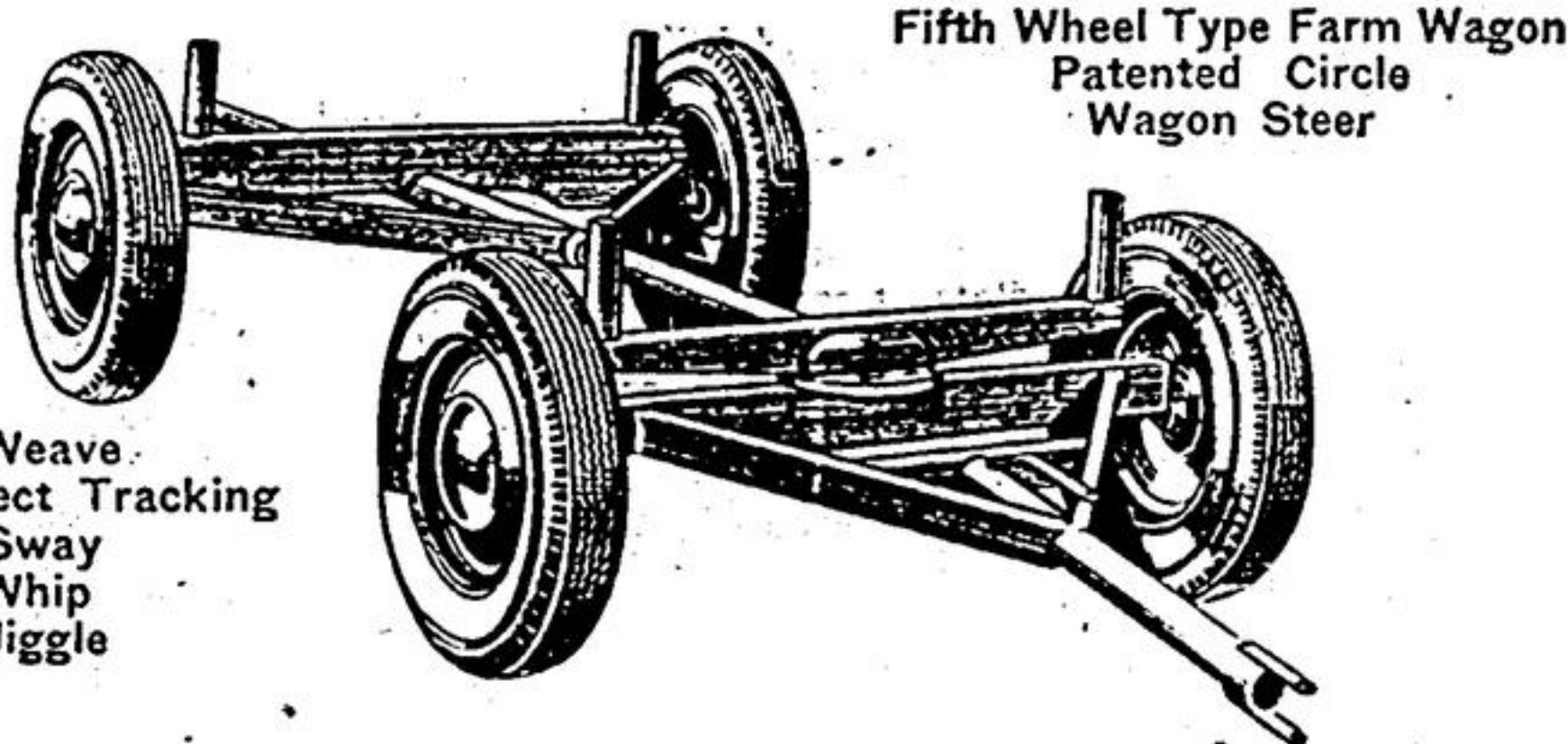
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