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Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. J. H. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean of the Evening School Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

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Lesson for May 3

THE BENEFITS OF TOTAL ABSTINENCE

LESSON TEXT—Dan. 1:1-20.

GOLDEN TEXT—"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."—Dan. 1:8.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Four Sensible Boys.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Benefits of Total Abstinence.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—A Sound Mind and a Sound Body.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Some Benefits of Total Abstinence.

I. Daniel and His Companions in Captivity in Babylon (vv. 1-4).

They were carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in the first siege of Jerusalem. At the command of the king certain choice young men, including the seed of the king and of the princes, were carried away that they might be made skillful in wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, understanding science so that they might be trained to stand in the king's palace.

II. The Trial of Daniel and His Companions (vv. 5-13).

1. Their Conscience Tested (v. 5).

By the appointment of the king, a daily portion of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank was arranged for them. This was contrary to the custom among the godly Jews. Being contrary to the Jewish customs, they could not conscientiously partake of them. It should ever be borne in mind that conscience is the groundwork of human character.

2. Their Change of Name (vv. 6,7).

Among the Hebrews most significant names were given to children. Daniel means, "God is my judge." The significance of this name was that all the problems of life were submitted to God for His decision. God was made the arbiter of his life. This was the secret of Daniel's life. No doubt this expresses the purpose of his parents in giving him the name. His name was changed to Belteshazzar meaning "Bel's prince," the one whom the chief god of the Babylonians favors. Hananiah means, "gift of" or "beloved of Jehovah," and his name was changed to Shadrach which signifies, "illumined by the sun god, Rak." Mishael means, "who is as God" and his name was changed to Meshach meaning "who is like the goddess Shesach, the gentle one." Azariah means, "Jehovah is our help," and was changed to Abednego which means, "the servant of Nego." Back of the change of names was the attempt of Satan to wipe out the name of the true God, and have these young men lose their separation and thus become assimilated among the heathen.

3. Their Religious Life (v. 8).

This involved their refusal to eat meat and to drink wine which was contrary to their teaching. In the case of Daniel, at least, it also involved praying three times a day.

4. Their Courtesy (vv. 8-13).

Daniel seems to have been the spokesman for the company. Although Daniel's heart was fixed, he did not forget to be a gentleman. He requested to be excused from this meat and drink in order that he be not defiled. Christians should learn from this to be courteous even in times of great trials. God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with those who were over him.

III. The Success of Daniel and His Companions (vv. 14-21).

1. Their Physical Health (vv. 14-16).

A test was made for ten days, and it was shown that they were fairer in countenance and fatter in flesh than those who indulged in the king's meat. Godly and temperate living pays. It is obligatory upon God's children today to conscientiously abstain from that which is contrary to His law. It means total abstinence from intoxicating liquors, and everything which would injure the health.

2. Mental Growth (vv. 17-20).

Daniel and his companions were found to be ten times superior to their comrades in matters of wisdom and understanding. It is always true that those who abstain from indulging in the use of strong drink have clearer minds and are mentally better equipped for their work than those who indulge.

3. The Social and Political Preferment (v. 19).

They stood before the king.

4. Their Temporal Influence (v. 21).

They were all advanced to positions of influence and Daniel became president of the college of wise men, and the prime minister of the nation.

5. Spiritual Insight (v. 17).

Because of Daniel's loyalty to God, visions embracing the entire history of the world came to him and Nebuchadnezzar's dream was revealed.

Do Right

Do right, and God's recompense to you will be the power of doing more right. Give, and God's reward to you will be the spirit of giving more. Withhold from God and the accounting will follow.

Society

Society is a more level surface than we imagine. Wise men or absolute fools are hard to be met with; and there are few giants or dwarfs.—Hazlitt.

THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR TOPIC

By the Rev. Charles E. Schaeffer, D. D.

May 3rd.—**How Can We Help to Make Home Happy? Ephesians 4:29-34; 5:1, 2.**

The home lies at the basis of human society. The individual is not, but the family is the unit of society. God hath set the solitary in families. Out of the home are the issues of life. A man seldom rises higher than his own roof nor sinks lower than his own cellar. A home is not identical with a house. The Greeks had two words: one, oikos, which means the inhabitants, the dwellers in a house; the other, domos, which meant the building in which the people live. In our language we use the words house and home to indicate this difference. Money can buy a house, the furniture—man can furnish a house, but neither money nor household goods can make a home. The home is more than four walls with a roof over them. It is the code of love and fellowship, the place where we can be our real selves and where the influences of life count for most. A home is a miniature world. Practically all aspects of human life are reproduced there. From it come the future citizens, the workers of the world, statesmen and poets and prophets, and so much depends upon the influence and environment of the home that practically every other relationship and phase of human life is affected thereby. Nothing is more serious than the break-down of the home. Nothing can ever compensate for an unhappy home. Life holds no greater tragedy than unhappy marriages. There are many forces at work in our modern life which tend to destroy the real happiness of the home.

Our **social conditions** war against it. The pressure of social life, the way in which society is organized, the demands which are constantly upon us make it very difficult to maintain a normal and natural home life. In many homes families scarcely ever see all of themselves at one time. A home becomes a mere dormitory, or a boarding-house.

The **economic conditions** of our present day life militate against it. The high rents, the high cost of living, the pressure due to industrial and other conditions, work havoc with our homes.

Moral conditions are likewise responsible. There is a pressure of the empty purse but there is also the force of a perverted heart. Iniquity in the soul, lack of fidelity and love are responsible in large measure for unhappy homes.

Then there is the legal aspect of the matter. The State makes it too easy in many instances to break up the homelife by divorcing husband and wife on often very trivial grounds. The United States leads the world in cases and causes for divorce. Usually in divorce cases the greatest sufferers are the children. These are always the principal sufferers in an unhappy or a broken home.

Being of such great importance in our individual, social and national life, how can the home be made more of an ideal place; what can we do to make home happy? Supremely we must enthrone Jesus Christ. In Many homes He is no longer in evidence. Religion has been barred out. If religion cannot be lived in the fellowship of the home it cannot be learned or lived anywhere else and a religion that can do nothing to make home the brightest and happiest spot on earth can do very little to make the world a decent place in which to live. No home can be happy where the principles of religion do not prevail. It cannot be founded on untruth and falsehood. It must be a reality. All make-believe and camouflage must be absent and a sense of genuine worth and real religion must prevail. In many homes the family altar has disappeared. The old-time custom of gathering the family together in the morning or evening for a period of worship is gone. This is a decided loss. Happy memories cluster around that family altar and many a boy or girl has felt it like an anchor in his or her soul. If the spirit of Christ dwells in our homes then all those nobler and kindlier virtues will abound; then love and kindness and unselfishness and forbearance and forgiveness will be everywhere in evidence. There is nothing that so brightens and cheers every corner of the home as sweetness and gentleness and courtesy and goodness and fidelity. In the sunshine of those virtues the soul can rest and feel itself at perfect peace.

Then there must be high ideals maintained. The home must have worth while ends and purposes. The objectives must be high and lofty. The environment ought to be of the very best. An indispensable thing is cleanliness. It is very difficult to be happy or holy amid unclean surroundings. "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Slovenliness is not only a matter of the body or of the room, it is a matter of the mind and of the heart, as well. A happy home depends on a proper atmosphere. What a strange and subtle and yet what a real thing atmosphere is! We can create it. We can make it what we please. We can make it a blight or a blessing. We can make it conducive to sadness or to gladness. Many other things conspire to make home happy. It is a place where books and flowers and music and art and beauty and loveliness should abound. One word covers it all and that is the old word LOVE. Where it is found there real happiness dwells. When it is not there nothing can atone for its absence.

Listen to what Theodore Roosevelt once said:

"Questions like the tariff and the currency are of literally no consequence whatsoever compared with the vital question of having the unit of our social life, the home, preserved. If the average husband and wife fulfill their duties toward one another and toward their children as Christianity teaches them, then we may rest absolutely assured that the other problems will solve themselves; but if we have solved every other problem in the wisest possible way, it shall profit us nothing if we have lost our own national soul, and we shall have lost it, if we do not have the question of the relations of the family put upon a proper basis."

Every nation that ever fell had its roots of destruction in its corrupted family life.

One is impressed with the attitude and teaching of Jesus on the subject of the home. He Himself was homeless. He had no where to lay His head, yet the religion of this homeless Teacher was that of the home. He always spoke in terms of the family. God is a Father, man is a child. Heaven is home. The self-reproach of sin is simply homesickness. "I will arise and go to my Father." In love for little children He found fitness for the Kingdom. His teaching was essentially domestic. His theology was paternal. His sociology was fraternal.

Young people especially can do much to make home happy. They have the power to radiate joy and gladness. Nothing can be more beautiful than to see children devoted to their parents, loving and obeying them in all things. Many a father's and mother's heart has been cheered and gladdened by faithful sons and daughters who by their lives have honored the family name.

Young folks are looking forward to setting up homes of their own. If the homes in which they were reared were not ideal, they can at least strive to make their future homes what they ought to be. Let them attach high value and importance to the home and to homelife. Let them make their homes the brightest spots on earth. That will solve all running after other pleasures and finding pasture in other fields.

"To an open house in the evening,
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden,
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless,
And all men are at home."

Gilbert K. Chesterton.

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HOW EXCESSIVE TAXES BLIGHT A NATION'S LIFE

Productive Effort Stops if Government Takes Undue Share of Profits, Says Treasury Official.

WEALTH IN RUSSIA FLED BEFORE THE TAXGATHERER

Men in America Prefer Golf to Giving Fruits of Three Days Work a Week to Income Taxes

The blighting effects of excessive taxation, leading to a nation's economic destruction, are described in the current issue of the American Bankers Association Journal by Garrard B. Winston, Under-secretary of the Treasury. Citing possible effects on the Ford Motor Car Company, he declares that "the value is so large and its ownership so centered it is conceivable that collection of inheritance taxes may check, if not destroy, that unit of policy which has created and expanded that industry and thus prevent its future prosperity. Of what avail, then, is it to any government if it collects one hundred million dollars once in estate taxes and destroys a source of income upon which it can rely for revenue year after year?

"Success of the Ford Company does not mean simply that Mr. Ford and his son have grown wealthy. It means employment of tens of thousands of men and women; that mines, forests, railroads and vessels are brought into use; that the public has received an efficient and inexpensive means of transportation; that the farm is in touch with the city, and the worker with his office." Mr. Winston says in part:

Wealth Flees Oppression

"Upon first impression it might appear that a nation could take all of the earnings of its citizens or all of their property. The Soviet government proposed to appropriate all instrumentalities of trade and commerce. Yet, when the state reached out to grasp this wealth, it disappeared and left nothing but a few tangible objects, such as gold and jewels, which were easily transported to other countries. Wealth in Russia ceased to exist.

"If income tax rates are placed so nigh that capital in productive business no longer gives a net return commensurate with the risk, capital will go out of productive business, lie idle, go abroad, go into tax-exempt securities, or find other ways of avoiding the tax. If income tax rates are so excessive that a man of ability finds he must work more than three days a week for the government, he will become discouraged and decide that the result is not worth the effort. Less income will be produced and less will be realized from the tax.

"Recently a letter came to the Treasury from a small farmer. He owned a few acres which in 1913 were assessed at $900 and on which a tax of $13 was levied. In 1924 the assessed value increased to $3,200 and the tax to $123, but the farm failed to produce any more. Taxes exceeded the rental value of the land and more than the net earnings of the property were taken by the state. The farm was abandoned and now produces no tax.

"Often there come to notice cases where a particular improvement is not made, or a particular business is not started, because after deducting taxes the risk exceeds the value of the expected return. Men have dropped business, spent their winters in Florida and their summers abroad, because what they are permitted to retain under present tax rates is not worth the labor they must give to acquire it. They prefer golf to the further development of the country.

Unscientific Taxes Destroy a Nation

"Unscientific methods of taxation may actually destroy the very earnings or property which it should be the principal interest of a government to foster. When it reaches the limits of what is known as its taxable capacity, a nation has begun to die. If taxes are raised too high, a country will slowly but surely destroy itself. It will use for daily consumption the seed corn on which its future life depends, and the spirit of initiative and adventure in its people will finally disappear. One or more of three things happen: The quantity of consumption is cut down, which means a lowering of the standard of living; or capital accumulations for extensions, improvements and new undertakings must diminish, resulting in a slowing up of progress and lessening eventually of taxable revenue; or, thirdly, a slackening of effort on the part of the citizen will take place when too large a part of his earnings are taken in taxes.

"The effort in taxation should be to find the tax which will continue to raise money over a period of years. Invariably, with an excessive tax, its yield has fallen off year by year, while each rate reduction is reflected in an increase of taxable income. If the Treasury is to be assured a continuance of revenue, our citizens must prosper. If they are to prosper, the appropriation by the state of their earnings and property must be based upon economically sound principles."

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