



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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Issue # 411

The Biblical View of Divorce & Remarriage

I think that the subject that I have chosen to speak on relates to some of those garments that people do not like to put out of the way in coming to Jesus. I would invite your attention for a spring board referring several passages to Matthew 19. The purpose of the message is to reconvince those who are convinced of God's standard in relation to the subject of divorce and remarriage, and to instruct or

convince any that have questions regarding this subject. I will read Matthew 19:3–12. I will refer to some other passages as we consider this subject.

“The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? (4) And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and

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female, (5) And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? (6) Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (7) They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? (8) He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you

to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. (9) And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. (10) His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. (11) But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is

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given. (12) For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

I want to give a brief survey of the nation in which we are living according to one of Harold S. Martin's tracts. In 1887 there was hardly a divorce in the U.S. In 1913 Canada had 60 divorced couples. I pulled out a world almanac book of facts. My almanac is not as recent as it could be. However, it was interesting to notice some statistics in relation to marriage and divorce. Some of these include some estimates and marriage licenses for some states, but it does give us a bit of a picture of where the world is heading. In 1890 there were 570,000 marriages and 33,461 divorced in the almanac. If we figure that out as a percentage, about 5.9% of the marriages ended in divorce, or of divorces in comparison to marriages.

In 1900, ten years later, the percentage was about 7.9%. Twenty-five years later in 1925, the percentage was about 13.4%. In 1950, the percentage was about 23.1%. In 1975 the per-

centage was about 48.1%. It was almost half already in 1975. I think my book was from 1984 and it remained somewhere near that percentage until that date. I am not sure what it would be up-to-date, but we will easily and readily see that the greatest increase has been in the last part of this century. We might say that if the days of Noah were characterized by marrying and giving in marriage (or swapping in marriage) certainly the world today is in a similar situation.

I would like to look at the subject from three perspectives, and I have about eight points under each one. I) Several foundational Scriptural principles in relation to the subject. These are some that we need to be reminded of. Then, II) Several problems. These are not problems to God, but they are problems to men. III) Safeguarding the Biblical practice.

I) *Some foundational Scriptural principles.* 1) *The home is one of God's basic institutions for man's well-being.* This is something that we ought to keep in mind. The plan is one of the oldest institutions. In the Garden of Eden God planned the home. The Scriptures give direction to fathers. They speak of fathers, mothers, and children. They give illustrations and exam-

ples of homes. The Bible is full of it from cover to cover. We need to convince and again remind ourselves of the fact that the home is one of God's basic institutions for our well-being.

2) *The home normally consists of one man and one woman and their offspring.* A single parent home is abnormal. It is good to remind ourselves of that because of the situation we find the world in. Single parent homes are not abnormal in the world. However, in the Church I think that it is not the norm. God does allow this at times. We do not always understand why God works the way he works. We cannot answer all of those questions. However, we do know that the Bible says clearly that He is a Father of the widows and the orphans and that God's grace is sufficient in those situations that were not planned to be that way. However, today the single parent situations are often a result of divorce and remarriage and that is not the norm for the Christian.

3) *A proper marriage is the only arrangement that makes it right for a man and a woman to live together.* These principles I am sure are not new to us, but it is good to remind ourselves of them. The fact is that a proper marriage is that which makes it right for a man and a woman to

live together as husband and wife. The live-in types of arrangement (the common-law marriages) are not according to Scripture. God expects us to have a proper marriage to live together as husband and wife.

4) *Marriage is for time and is basically a physical union.* This is something we do well to keep in mind. In Genesis 2:23, 24, at the institution of the home when God had made the woman Eve from one of Adam's ribs we read, "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Again I repeat, marriage is for time and is basically a physical union. We might say right along with that point that spiritual death does not disannul marriage. Since marriage is a physical union, if a person who once knew the Lord leaves the Lord, and no longer follows Him, that does not disannul his marriage. Marriage is a physical union basically. Of course, we know that two individuals who are serving the Lord, we believe, enhances the marriage relationship.

5) *Marriage is a binding*

agreement during the lifespan of both parties. Again this is something that is becoming more foreign in the world as well as in many churches. However, this is the Bible concept — the Scriptural principle. A mere physical union does not constitute marriage. I might stop with a statement at that point and read a few verses in 1 Corinthians 6. The teaching here is on keeping ourselves (our members) for the Lord. 1 Corinthians 6:15–18 says, “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. (16) What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. (17) But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (18) Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” The point I am taking from this is the fact that physical union outside of marriage is a one flesh union. He makes that clear. He said, “Shall I take my members and make them the members of a harlot?” He speaks of being “joined to an harlot.” That is a one flesh union but it does not constitute marriage.

In the Old Testament, a marriage was required for this type of situation unless the father of the damsel refused it or objected. Divorce does not dissolve the marriage union as death does. The concept we are building on is that marriage is a binding agreement during the lifespan of both parties. Romans 7:1–3 makes it very clear. “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? (2) For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. (3) So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” It is a binding agreement as long as you both shall live, as we have in the marriage vow. We promise to be faithful to each other as long as we live.

Divorce does not dissolve the marriage union as death does. We recognize the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus gave, in various illustrations and points, “It hath been said . . . but I say unto you.” Then we read in Matthew 5:31,

32, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: (32) But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." If divorce dissolved the marriage union like death does then Jesus would not have needed to say what he did in verse 32, namely "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." The fact is, divorce does not dissolve the marriage union. We need to keep this concept clear. Marriage is binding as long as there is life.

6) *A sixth concept is that the Old Testament and the New Testament standard was not exactly the same.* That is clear in Matthew 5. If we turn to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, it again emphasizes this fact that God did make allowance for a bill of divorcement. "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. (2) And when she is departed out of his house, she

may go and be another man's wife. (3) And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; (4) Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

I have heard the thought already as to why God made this exception in the Old Testament. I think from the New Testament it is clear that God did not originally intend, or plan, that it should be this way. Possibly one of the reasons He made this exception is because back then He was working in a nation, in a bit of a different way. He knew that there would be things that would happen which the nation would be involved in. Working with a nation the Bible says Moses made this exception [see Matthew 19:8]. We do not know for sure, but it is obvious that what God allowed in the Old Testament a writing of a bill of divorcement. Jesus made no room for it whatsoever in the New Testament. Thus, there is a difference. The standard was not

exactly the same.

7) *If separation of a legitimate marriage occurs there are only two options.* What are they? The apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians makes it clear that there are only two options if there is a separation of a legitimate marriage. 1 Corinthians 7:10–16, “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: (11) But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. (12) But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. (13) And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. (14) For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. (15) But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. (16) For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy

wife?”

The two options that are for those who are legitimately married and separate are in verse 11 — Either remain single or be reconciled. Those are the two options. I think individuals sometimes get a hold of verse 15 and try to make it say something nearly the opposite, or something other than what is really taught. Paul is simply saying in verse 15 that a husband or a wife (he is not saying they have a license to remarry) are not bound. See, this one phrase, “A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases,” is not saying that the marriage bond is no longer effective if the other person leaves. If he would be meaning or saying that he would be contradicting what he said in verse 11.

That is not what he is saying. Rather he is saying that the one who stays is not responsible for what the other one did. That is the way I understand verse 15. The one who remained is not under bondage for what the other person did.

8) *Marriage is a state and so is adultery.* Adultery is also a state. In the verses that we have been reading you have noticed a number of times that the “eth” is at the end of a word. I would like to turn back to the passage I read at the beginning in Matthew 19. In

our language we would often change the “eth” to an “ing.” I think that the “eth” on the end of a word in the Scripture means a continuing action. I think that we understand that. I would like to call your attention to Matthew 19:9. He says, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” Committeth is equivalent to “doth commit.” If you want to do an interesting study sometime, take the Greek word in 1 John 3, in relation to “committeth sin,” and see how many different ways that word is translated in that same chapter.

Marriage is a state and adultery is a state. That is a principle which we need to keep clear. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 Paul says, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God.” None of these will make it to heaven. If a person is found in a state of adultery he will not make it to heaven. The apostle Paul says next, “Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified,

but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” There is an answer, and there is a remedy.

Again in Galatians 5:19–21, in the other list of sin it is made clear that adulterers, “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” It is possible for preachers and people to reason one to a false path thinking they can avoid going into hell, but it impossible for a preacher to reason them out. Let us not be deceived.

II) *I would like to consider in the second place several problems.* Again, I say they are not problems with God. Rather, they are problems basically because there are individuals who create justifications or reasons why their situation is all right. I suppose that Pennsylvania is not a whole lot different from Georgia. There are people the world over who are seemingly very spiritual, who find reasons why their marriage is acceptable. Maybe we will touch a few of those as we consider these problems. I will give the problems according to the way people say it sometimes.

1) *The innocent party is free to remarry.* Did you ever hear that? “Well, he left me so it was not my doing. Therefore, I am free to remarry.” I think that the consistency of the Scripture with the word “whosoever,” and “marry,” makes it clear that this is not the

case. The Scripture makes it clear that anyone who remarries commits adultery. Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

2) *Another problem that people raise sometimes is in relation to this exception clause in Matthew 19:9.* Marital unfaithfulness is considered an exception. It is another one of the excuses that people try to use. I think it is because they are trying to justify themselves. We understand that Matthew was written to the Jews. We need to understand the Jewish practice in relation to (in our day we would call it the engagement period) the equivalent to the Jew. It was even a little stronger than what we consider the engagement period today. If I under their practice, after their covenant relationship, while the bride was waiting for the groom to return they referred to themselves, or others referred to them as husband and wife. The illustration of Joseph and Mary is a clear illustration in the Scripture of exactly what this was talking about. "Joseph . . . was minded to put her away," (Matthew 1:19) before they had actually been married and had come together. Of course the Lord told him that he did not need to.

The terms themselves also

help us to understand what Jesus was talking about in verse 9. We understand fornication to describe the physical union outside of a marriage bond. It helps to make it clear. That is not an excuse for marital unfaithfulness. If you are married to someone who does not prove faithful to you that is not an excuse to go and marry someone else. The exception is not referring to that.

3) *Another one of the problems or arguments which people raise or ideas that surface is that the first marriage is the only one God recognizes.* Did you ever hear that one before? In fact there are some churches that would hold to that idea. I would simply raise the question in relation to John 4, the woman at the well, what did Jesus say to her? "Thou hast had five husbands" (John 4:18). Why did Jesus call them husbands? Why did Jesus call them all husbands? It simply emphasizes again, the fact that God recognized five marriages and the one she was living with now was not her husband. God called them all marriages. We agree that the first marriage is the only legitimate marriage, but the Scripture consistently recognizes all marriages as a marriage. We need to understand that.

4) *Another one of the excuses that individuals raise is that if*

divorce and remarriage takes place before conversion it can be overlooked and forgiven, and the two that are together now can remain married. Did you ever hear that one before? Again, it is simply an excuse to justify a relationship which God does not recognize as legitimate. We believe that the Scriptural remedy for sin is faith, repentance, confession and forsaking sin. That is the Scriptural remedy. John the Baptist would not have lost his head if he had not reproved Herod (an ungodly man by the way) for taking his brother Philip's wife. If this idea were true, then if a marriage was legitimate initially, and a partner turned away from the faith the one who would be left would be free to marry another believer. Do you follow the argument? Some believe that divorce and remarriage before conversion can be forgiven. Then, if they are divorced and remarried and they find the Lord, they can stay in that state. That is the argument. If that is true, then if a person is legitimately married and turns away from the truth, then the one who is left would be free to marry again. We believe that both are wrong.

5) *Another argument is that man cannot dissolve what God joins together.* We believe there

is a sense in which, when a marriage is legitimate, a man cannot dissolve it. Yet, God does recognize in Matthew 19:6 that man can put asunder what God has joined together. "Let not man put asunder." Man can do it. Men can dissolve it in a sense.

6) *Another argument is that it is asking too much for divorced and remarried couples to separate.* Suppose the first marriage was not so glorious. They simply did not get along. Now they are married to a partner who is really working well. It is simply asking too much for them to separate. I had a neighbour whom I spoke with before he was about to enter his fourth marriage remarrying his second wife. I think as I recall the conversation, I simply shared with him and quoted one of these verses in either Matthew 5:32 or the equivalent in one of the Gospels. He said, "What? Does that mean we need to separate?" I thought it was interesting that a man simply hearing a verse like that and not professing to be a Christian knew and understood what it really meant.

I asked him, "Do you think that it is asking too much to live a single life for the next forty years and make it to heaven? Or, would you rather go and have a wife and then to spend eternity in hell?" We need to be convinced

that heaven is cheap at any cost.

“Do gain it forth, or all is lost,
For earthly gain is only dross,
And not the value, but the
cross.”

Listen, God’s ways are never too much. God always repays more than He asks of us. Let us be convinced of that. Ezra 10 is an example of the time when they had heathen wives and they were called to get rid of these wives. It was wickedness. Was that asking too much? I believe that Matthew 19:12 is speaking about those, when He says some are made, “eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.” This may simply refer to those who find themselves living a life of celibacy in accordance, or in an effort to obey the simple Scriptural teaching in regard to this subject.

Mark 10:37–39 and Matthew 19:29 “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” Why does it say, “every man that has left wife?” I think it is clear that there are those who will need to leave their companion to follow the way of the cross.

7) *Another argument very closely related to this last thought, is if divorce is wrong*

then breaking up a happy relationship is divorce and would be a mistake. Did you ever hear anything like that? “Then, you are saying you ought to have a second divorce?” The fact is, it is divorce initially. That is why a person who divorces forfeits his right of marriage. It is divorce.

8) *Another argument when there have been multiple marriages, is that one ought to go back to the first partner when possible.* Maybe we touched this thought before. I would simply say this: the New Testament gives no instruction for the untangling of the marriage relationship. Keep that in mind. There is no instruction for what to do when people get married three, four or five times. I would simply say it this way. The Scripture is simple and easy to understand for those who will. It is easy to understand. The complications of men make it difficult. The Scripture prohibits mixed marriage relationships. Again, I remind you of 1 Corinthians 7. If there is a separation, there are only two options for a person; either be reconciled or remain single — remain unmarried.

A first marriage of an unmarried man or an unmarried companion to a previously married companion is a marriage. Let us

not confuse ourselves with that as well. The term “whosoever,” and “marry,” apply to every situation. There were not any qualifications given in any of these verses in relation to this subject.

III) *Safeguarding the Biblical position.* 1) *We need to maintain the Biblical standard of purity.* I believe that this subject of divorce and remarriage is a subject or issue of morality. We maintain the Bible standard of purity. “Keep thyself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22), was the direction of the apostle Paul to Timothy. There are many Scriptures in relation to this thought. It is an aide and safeguard against divorce and remarriage.

2) *Maintain a healthy reserve between men and women.* I think that as a people of God we ought to be friendly and courteous, but not too familiar, not too light-hearted and not too joking. I suppose that you with me have witnessed scenes where men and women were very light hearted with each other in the world and maybe it was a secretary with someone she worked with or whatever. That is part of the reason the breakdown is, or exists in this society. It is due to the lack of reserve between men and women. Let us continue to maintain a healthy reserve. It is necessary.

In relation to that point, I was raised a “carpenter” in two ways (I have told some people). We framed houses. At one house with a deck in Pensacola we sub-contracted. The contractors often had secretaries working for them and there were many contractors who were divorced and remarried. Do you wonder why? It is simple. The reserve between men and women is not what it ought to be. In the first place, the secretaries should not have even been there in the office working. Let us maintain a healthy reserve between men and women.

3) *We need to maintain high courtship standards.* I am one who, and I think our church is supporting and promoting the hands off policy in relation to courtship standards. That policy lays a groundwork for an enduring marriage. Let us not be ashamed of holding that kind of standard. Homes begun lightly will more easily crumble. We want our homes built upon a solid foundation. We need to maintain a standard in courtship that is above reproach. Individuals should not have to wonder, “I wonder what they really do when they are by themselves?” By the way our young people conduct themselves in public, it ought to be obvious that they are keeping a high standard.

I might say this for the sake of the young people who may read this, the hands off policy continues on through the engagement period until the marriage bond — until the marriage union. That ought to be the way that it is. We need to maintain that high standard.

4) *In order to safeguard this Biblical position, we need to maintain proper relationships with those who are divorced and remarried.* It becomes an increasingly difficult question in our world, “How do we relate to those who are divorced and remarried?” A) *Let us not be ashamed of the Biblical position.* Let us not be ashamed of sharing that position and standing for the truth. I would recommend the booklet *Relating To the Divorced And Remarried: Questions and Answers* published by the joint publications committee of a number of church groups. B) I think that we may not have the same free social exchange with individuals like that, as we do with our own church people. I have seen personally, in my short years experience, individuals, church members who were interested in following the Lord. Sometimes those individuals in situations like that almost have more of a glowing testimony than maybe our own church people

do. Well, let us not be deceived. I have seen individuals who somehow or another have moved away from this Biblical position in relation to divorce and remarriage partly because of that kind of influence. We may not have the same free social exchange with individuals who are divorced and remarried.

5) *We need to build solid homes and honourable relationships.* I think we ought to make our homes a peaceful, harmonious, happy place. Something I had in my file said, “Fifty-six percent of all divorces are a result of financial tension in the home.” Over half of the divorces are a result of financial tensions. Certainly, as we build solid homes we have homes that are peaceful and happy and harmonious, it helps to safeguard this position of the Scriptures.

6) Develop an appreciation for the typology of Christian marriage. Read the passage again sometimes in Ephesians 5. You almost wonder sometimes when you read through that passage if it is really a passage on the home or if it is a passage on Christ and the Church. It seems it goes back and forth. We ought to develop the appreciation for the typology of the Christian marriage.

7) *Continue to emphasize the seriousness and the importance*

of marriage. I think we do that and we want to continue to do that. We say sometimes that marriage and choosing a life companion is one of the, or maybe the second most important choice we make in life. I think that is right. It is one of the choices that we make that has long-lasting effects. Somehow we need to continue to emphasize to our youth that this is an important step. “The choice that I make here could affect where I am eternally.” It could do that because the marriage partner does have an effect upon us.

8) *Last of all I think we need to hold the eternal blessings of Scriptural obedience.* We need

to keep lifting that before ourselves and before our people. There will be a blessing for those who obey the Scriptures. Again I remind you of that conversation with the neighbour. “Is not forty years of celibacy almost nothing in comparison to eternal blessings?” We would say, “Certainly it is.” Let us be re-convicted that the blessings of eternity are for those who obey the Scriptures. We want to continue to find ourselves in complete harmony in this area.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to hold forth a light and exemplify in your homes the kind of thing God is wishing to illustrate before the world.

Scripture References

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The Sin of Gossip

From a message by Harry Erb

Friday, October 10, 1997

Texter Mountain Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)
One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 14.

Our Lord's Prophecies.

I. Concerning Himself.

1. His suffering. — Matthew 16:21; 20:22; Luke 12:50.
2. His betrayal. — Matthew 20:18; 26:21; Mark 14:18;
Luke 22:21; John 13:21.
3. Desertion by disciples. — Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:27;
John 16:32.
4. Denial by Peter. — Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30; Luke
22:34; John 13:38.
5. To be mocked and scourged. — Matthew 20:19.
6. His crucifixion. — Matthew 20:19; John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32,
33.
7. Length of time in the grave. — Matthew 12:40; 16:21;
20:19.
8. His resurrection. — Matthew 20:19; 26:32; Mark 14:28.
9. To go before His disciples into Galilee. — Matthew 26:32;
28:7; Mark 14:28; 16:7.
10. His ascension. — John 13:33, 36; 14:2.
11. His second coming. — Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; 26:64;
Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27.

II. Concerning the disciples and the church.

1. Peter's death. — John 21:18, 19; 2 Peter 1:14.
2. Baptism of the Holy Ghost. — Acts 1:4–8.
3. Signs to follow the establishment of the kingdom. — Mark
16:17, 18.
4. Persecution of disciples. — Matthew 24:9, 10; Mark 13:
9–13; Luke 21:12, 16, 17.
5. Arising of false Christs and prophets. — Matthew 24:5, 11,
24; Mark 13:22.

III. Destruction of Jerusalem.

1. Of the temple. — Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6.
2. Of the city. — Luke 21:20–24.

3. Captivity and dispersion of its inhabitants. — Luke 21:24.
4. The signs that are to precede the fall. — Matthew 24:3–28; Mark 13:3–23; Luke 21:7–24.

IV. The end of the world.

1. The time unknown. — Matthew 24:42, 44; 25:13; Mark 13:32.
2. The signs that are to precede the end. — Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24, 25; Luke 21:25, 26.
3. The coming of the Son of man. — Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27.
4. The resurrection. — John 5:28, 29.
5. Gathering of the elect. — Matthew 24:31; 25:32.
6. Separation of the righteous from the unrighteous. — Matthew 25:32, 33.
7. The reward of the just. — Matthew 25:33, 34; John 5:29.
8. The punishment of the unjust. — Matthew 25:33, 46; John 5:29.

1. Mention some of Christ's fulfilled prophecies.
2. What description does history give of the destruction of Jerusalem?
3. What was the "power" which Christ promised in Acts 1:8?
4. Describe the second coming of Christ.
5. Tell of our Saviour as "Prophet," "Priest," and "King."

LESSON 15.

The Transfiguration.

[Read Matthew 17:1–13; Mark 9:2–10; Luke 9:28–36.]

I. Description.

1. Time. — During the third year of our Lord's ministry.
2. Place. — Not definitely known; probably Mt. Tabor.
3. Witnesses. — Peter, James, and John.
4. Companions with Jesus. — Moses and Elias.
5. Topic for conversation. — The crucifixion of Jesus.
6. During the first part of the transfiguration. — The disciples were heavy with sleep.
7. Their vision when they awoke. — Jesus appeared in His

glory, His face shone as the sun, His raiment white and glistening, and there appeared unto Him, Moses and Elias, talking with Him.

8. Peter's response. — "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles, one for Moses, one for Elias, and one for Thee."

9. Further evidence of Christ's glory. — They were overshadowed in a bright cloud.

10. God's message to the world. — This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him."

11. Effect on the disciples. — "They fell on their faces and were sore afraid."

12. Christ's message of comfort. — He touched them and said, "Arise, and be not afraid."

13. When they had lifted up their eyes. — "They saw no man, save Jesus only."

14. Christ's charge to His disciples. — They should tell no man until after His resurrection.

II. Thoughts awakened by the event.

1. The disciples had seen much of the human side of Christ. They now had a glimpse of the divine side.

2. That place was good enough for Peter. Heaven will be much better.

3. That was a glorious sight. How much more glorious the sight when Christ shall appear the second time, and all the saved of earth will rejoice at His coming.

4. The disciples trembled at the sight. Human unworthiness is never more keenly felt than when the weakness of man is brought face to face with the glory of God.

5. As a type of the second coming of Christ, the Transfiguration cannot but add to the desire of God's people for the hastening of that event.

6. Light and darkness cannot present a more striking contrast than the Transfiguration and the Crucifixion.

7. The conversation between Christ and His disciples immediately after this event (Matthew 17:9–13) indicates that commentators generally may be wrong as to who was the "Elias" mentioned in the narrative.

1. What do Moses and Elias represent in this event?
2. How long was this after Christ's prophecy that some then living should see the kingdom of God come with power?
3. How did Peter know Moses and Elias?
4. What was the probable reason that the Crucifixion made the topic for conversation at this meeting?
5. What thoughts are awakened by Peter's exclamation of joy? (Luke 11: 33).

Children's Book Reprint (Continued)

Greasy the Robber

It was impossible to compel the children to leave the barracks. Again and again they looked through the windows and called for the mother. Would her beloved voice be silenced forever? And would she be only a cold corpse in the morning? Yes, in the evening they were told that the mother had died an hour ago. Hugging each other, they sat behind the snow fences and cried bitterly. That night even Pasha did not sleep; with his back against the snow fence he looked into the distance, where the rails seemed to disappear out of sight. In his childish mind the terrible happenings of the last few days passed again before him. When he finally saw the train drawing nigh, he said "Shura, I will live no longer without Father and Mother. Come, let us lay ourselves on the rails. The engine will crush us, and then we shall be dead. What do we have to live

for now? Where shall we go, and to whom shall we be of any use?" With these words Pasha took his sister by the hand and dragged her to the rails.

Shura was terrified; she took her small brother in her arms and cried with sobs. "No; for nothing in the world will I go with you to cast myself under the train. Neither will I let you go. I am terrified! It is terrible!"

"Let me go; I shall go alone!" cried the boy.

While they talked to each other, the train rushed by. Pasha threw himself on his face to the ground and began to complain loudly, "Why have you held me back? I do not want to live anymore." However, his sister spoke to him kindly in order to persuade him to give up his horrible thoughts. After a long time, when he had become calmer, he promised not to think anymore about death and not to leave her

alone in the world.

After this the children huddled together in their refuge, waiting for the break of day, determined to see the grave of their parents in the morning. To the freezing and hungry children, the cold night seemed infinitely long. Finally, at daybreak they hastened to the cemetery, where in an especially enclosed corner those who had died of infectious diseases were buried. At the gate the children begged the keeper to let them in and show them the grave of their parents. But the man answered in a harsh voice, "How many bodies were carried out here only last night? could I know who is buried here? Besides, ten bodies are usually thrown into one hole: sometimes even twenty.

Not achieving anything. the children looked with eyes red from weeping through the cracks of the fence toward the irregular mounds of wet clay. For a long time they stood there crying and looking at the graves, until the keeper drove them away. Oppressed with sorrow, the children, holding each other's hands, returned to the snow fences, which were witnesses of their cruel experiences of the last five days, including the parting with their beloved mother. This place now became the orphaned children's second home. Under the

protection of these fences they began to consider what to do next.

The very thought of being put into the barracks for orphans seemed terrible to them; yet they realized that it would be their salvation from hunger, which began to be more and more intense. Their meagre supply of food, as well as their money, had been taken with the rest of their baggage.

Fear overshadowed the lonesome, hungry, freezing children even though high above them the larks were joyfully singing their spring songs and the clear rays of the sun gilded everything around. In the hearts of the orphans it was a dark night. Their mutual sorrow drew the brother and sister together. Shura tried to be a mother to her little brother. She kissed him and tried to comfort him with the following words: "We shall not despair, my beloved: God will not forsake us."

Just as the children decided to follow the railroad to the next village to beg a bite of bread, they heard above them a coarse voice. "What are you doing here? To whom do you belong?" An unknown uniformed man appeared before them and looked at them searchingly. They became so completely confused

that they could not say at once that they were the children of immigrants and had just recently lost their parents. The stranger commanded them to follow him and led them into the distribution office. There it was promptly decided to send them to the barracks for orphans, where they did not want to go because it meant separation for them. The girls' barracks were several railroad stations distant. Not heeding the pleadings and tears of the children, the officials took Pasha to the boys' barracks about two miles distant, while Shura was sent on the train to the girls' home. The sorrow of the children at parting cannot be described, for they lost in each other all that was still dear to them on earth.

Pasha was taken to the barracks where three hundred boys had already been placed. Many of them who had lived there a long time had become very mischievous, since they were now accustomed to the environment. The newcomer was greeted by the boys with coarse jokes, shoves, and pushes. Pasha entertained only one thought within a week: to flee from the barracks. The whole surroundings — the indifference toward the needs of the children, the coarse manners of the inmates, the continuous

squabbling and fighting, as well as the obnoxious dried fish soup at dinner — had become intolerable to him. The lad watched for a suitable moment for the flight.

The boys were forbidden to leave the barracks without being accompanied, but Pasha dared not tarry. He went out in the dark, climbed over a low place in the board enclosure, and ran, as if being chased, in the opposite direction of the railroad. About four miles from the barracks was the beginning of a large forest. On arriving there, Pasha felt somewhat calmer. He ran no more, but walked on, endeavoring not to lose sight of the edge of the woods, yet trying to get as far as possible from the barracks. Pasha walked until he was too tired to go further; then he lay down under a tree and was soon fast asleep. He dreamed that he was overtaken and carried back to the barracks, where he received a whipping and the obnoxious fish soup was continuously poured into his open mouth.

The warm spring sun was already high in the sky when the little runaway awoke. The manifold song of the birds almost deafened him; it seemed as though the feathery songsters wanted to boast of their art before the intruder in their green

domain. Pasha arose and thought about what to do next. He decided to return to his home village of Sosnovka; he had not forgotten the name of his district or country. What good times he used to have in Sosnovka! He remembered the small but beautiful river where he had bathed and caught fish with the other children. He would like very much to have seen his beloved sister before going. but where or how could he find her? Besides, it terrified him to think that he might be found and brought back to the barracks. Therefore, he bravely decided to go on so that he would soon be far from the hated place; then he would inquire more particularly about the way to his home village.

With the exception of one village where he begged bread, he avoided the homesteads all that day. As the second night overtook him, he went further and deeper into the woods to spend the night. He lay down under a big tree and was soon fast asleep. Before daybreak he was awakened by a slap, and somebody called him with a loud voice. "Hey, there! Get up, little fellow! Why do you lie here? With whom are you here?" When Pasha arose, he was confronted by three fellows armed from head to foot. He was thoroughly frightened!

"Be not afraid; we will not harm you. Tell us how you came here."

When Pasha saw that these men were not from the barracks, he told them freely what he had passed through and where he wanted to go. The men listened attentively; the clever and daring boy appealed to them. After a short consultation they decided to take him along with them, "that he may not perish," they said. "This stripling can become somebody yet. He was not afraid to flee from the orphanage, and now he wants to undertake the long voyage to his home village all alone! We just have to raise him in our style."

The men told the boy of their decision, at the same time praising their manner of life, and promised him that he should fare very well with them. Pasha dared not contradict them, because he feared these armed men. He went with them into the interior of the woods, where in the clearing a strong young man waited for them with horses. The man grasped Pasha under the arms, lifting the boy in front of himself on the horse, and they galloped away. After riding a long time by winding paths in the forest, they finally stopped. The horses were taken away, while the men, dragging Pasha behind them, crawled through an open-

ing under some trees broken down by a storm. After a few minutes' walk through thick woods they came upon a clearing where there were about twenty persons, mostly armed, including a few women. The eyes of all centered upon the boy, brought in as dirty and ragged as he was. They poured questions upon him: they wanted to know who he was and where he was from. One of the men, seemingly the leader of the band, asked, "What's your name?"

"Pasha; Paul!" answered the boy with a firm voice.

"What is your family name?"

"Tichomirov" (which means "quiet peace").

"That kind of a name does not fit among us: from now on you shall be called Greasy, since you are so dirty and greasy," said the man. From that time he knew no other name than Greasy; the new name pleased them all very much.

Now it became clear to Pasha that he had landed in a robbers' den. By and by he became acquainted with the new life, eventually finding even a liking for it. The carefree liberty, the good food, the joyous and animated mood — all these worked to make him friendly to those people, and he ceased to think about Sosnovka. Only his sister

Shura he could not forget; the thought of her often made him sad, as he assumed she was no longer alive.

The little "greasy" one soon became the darling of all the robbers and served all for a pastime. He became very much interested in their adventures and impatiently looked forward to their bringing in all new loot. Day by day he became familiar with the new life and soon forgot what once his parents had taught him about the sin of stealing. It became even a pleasure to him to inspect the looted things and to listen to the tales of the robbers when they returned from their "work," as they were pleased to call their evil trade.

By the time eight years had passed, the then sixteen-year-old Greasy took a lively part in the robberies and plunderings of the band. Because of his bravery, cleverness, and capability, he soon became the helper of the leader. Their work terrorized the inhabitants in a circumference of seventy-five miles. The deep woods made it possible for the robbers to carry on their work without disturbances. It seemed as though nobody could find and put a halt to their activities. They robbed everybody who fell into their hands and not seldom committed murder.

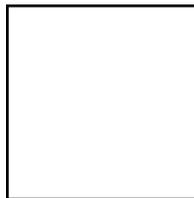
But everything has its own time. One thing, a very simple case, brought about a complete change in the lives of the robbers. One part of the band, with Greasy as their leader, overtook two men passing through the woods. They robbed them and then killed them. The robbers took their horses, clothing, and boots for themselves, besides three rubles and fifty kopeken.

In one of these sacks, with all kinds of utensils, the robbers found two books. The men wanted to throw the books away, but on the spur of the moment they considered that it would be better to take them along for cigarette paper, so Greasy stuck the books among his things. In the evening, after looking once more over the stolen goods robbed during the day, he pulled out the books and began to leaf through them. One of the books had to him the unfamiliar title *The Voice of Faith*; the other was a New Testament. Concerning the latter he had a feeble recollection from childhood; his parents also used to have a New Testament in Sosnovka.

To pass away the time, while he was lying in his bunk Greasy began to read the pages facing him at a chance opening of the book. There he read, "There is none that seeketh after God. . . .

Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:11, 13-18). He considered, "Formerly there were also people as we are today — 'Their feet are swift to shed blood.'" In his mind there appeared the picture of how they, the robbers, had on their quick horses pursued the fleeing travellers, and how, though the people pleaded for their lives, they had killed them without pity.

In remembering this, a strange feeling came over Greasy, and he considered further, "Who may those people have been? Why did they carry this book with them?" He began to leaf through the New Testament in the hope of finding some information about the murdered ones, but he found no document containing a clue as to who the slain ones were. He found only the following inscription on the flyleaf: "May 15, 1898, the day of conversion to the Lord, my repentance and new birth. On this day He forgave my sins and washed me with His holy blood."



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