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IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL
SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson
By REV. HAROLD L. LENDITZ, D.D., Dean of the Theological Institute of Chicago.
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Lesson for March 19

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PETER EXHORTS TO CHRISTIAN LIVING

LESSON TEXT—I Peter 2:9-18.
GOLDEN TEXT—But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.—I Peter 1:15.

Christians are not only "the called of Jesus Christ," but are also "exalted saints" (Rom. 1:6, 7). Peter had the same thing in mind when he (in v. 9 of our lesson) says that we "are thereunto called." Let us remember that when we are tempted to say that we "do not profess to be saints."

Dr. James Denney once remarked how odd it would look to see in the New Testament the statement, "I don't pretend to be a saint." It would be tantamount to saying, "I do not take the call of God very seriously and I do not profess to live up to it." When God calls, our answer is not a matter of indifference and . . . not a matter of presumption. "It is not a life for which we hunger, or on which we adventure of our own motion, or which we have to carry through our own resources; it is a life for which we have a divine summons, and that summons is our justification" (Arnold's Commentary). All believers are called to live a consistent, powerful, useful Christian life, and God makes such a life possible.

I. Living for Christ (vv. 9-12).

To live for Christ one must be born again into the position of a true believer. Peter was not so foolish as to urge that his readers try to live a Christian life without first being born into the family of God. He therefore lays a foundation for his exhortations by discussing in the early chapters of his epistle the atonement of Christ and the position of the believer. There he gives specific instructions to certain groups, leading up to the general plea for Christian life and testimony.

1. Among brethren (v. 9). Knowing what Christ has done for us, it might well be assumed that all of us who are His followers would love one another and do nothing but that which would promote Christian fellowship. But human nature prevails even in the Church, and sometimes displays its worst side there. Hence we need to consider this instruction of Peter that we cultivate unity, sympathy, and love among the brethren. Observe that this is not just a pious platitude which we may take or leave. It states our obligation to one another as Christians. Whatever others may do or say, let us be clear that we have obeyed this word of God.

2. With unbelievers (vv. 9-11). God has called us to live peaceably with all men. We will not carry out by returning for it more evil. If our ungodly neighbors or fellow workers mistreat us by word or deed, we are not to retaliate in kind. We are to control our tongues—how much we need to learn that lesson. We are not to be trickly and deceitful, not to look for a fight, but to seek peace.

3. For our own good (v. 12). What blessed assurances we find here for the believer. The eyes of the Lord are upon both the good and the evil in the world. He knows. Comfort also the promise of "blessing" in verse 9, of seeing "good days" in verse 10, of the assurance of grace in verse 11. It is a privilege honoring to God, but good for us to live as Christians.

II. Suffering for Christ (vv. 13-18).

Peter was writing to those who were bearing bitter persecution because they followed Christ. Perhaps some were tempted to give up their faith in Christ as they did so. "If there really is a God, if Christianity amounts to anything at all, certainly believers would not be permitted to suffer at the hands of enemies of Christ." Let us be clear that being a Christian in no way exempts us from the common experiences of human society, nor does it assure us that we will not have to bear persecutions and suffering. But (and here is a point of greatest importance), we are able to meet such difficulties in the name of Christ without fear or discouragement, for God is with us.

1. Not afraid (vv. 12, 14). The martyr spirit has not died out in the earth, and there are those in our day who stand unafraid before dictators and rulers who would destroy things because of their loyalty to Christ. "Be not afraid."

2. Not discouraged (vv. 15-17). The one who knows God's Word (and every Christian ought to know it) can give answer (v. 15) concerning his faith. Note that if we are punished for our own wrongdoing we may well be depressed, but if we meet persecution with a clear conscience (v. 16) we need feel no discouragement.

3. Not alone (v. 18). The path may be dark and difficult, but one thing we know, our Leader, Christ, walked an even darker and more desolate road. He is with us now with us, yes, in us. Remember that "Christ also hath once suffered" (v. 18) and go on your way in victory.

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Sixteen Million Acres Acquired For Forests

Since 1911, more than 16,000,000 acres have been approved for purchase by the United States government for National Forest purposes, according to the annual report of the National Forest Reservation Commission.

During the fiscal year 1938, title to 1,433,038 acres, equivalent to 2,240 square miles, passed to the United States, and the commission approved the additional purchase of 1,004,133 acres at an average price of $3.29 per acre.

The commission reported that there are 25,066,877 acres of purchase units and privately-owned land within the now established purchase units which are best suited for National Forest purposes, and that in these units it is believed federal action approved by the sole alternative to the social and economic decline of large areas and numbers of dependent people.

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Makes Poor Land Produce Paying Gains On Steers

Farmers who are interested in the record meeting at the Western Kentucky Experiment Substation at Princeton heard Supt. S. J. Lowry tell an amazing story of 10 years of pasture development on a farm on the poorest land in Caldwell county.

Land that had become almost worthless for pasture was given over to "treatments of limestone and phosphate, and the value of the land increased in terms of weight gains on cattle. Some of the land was first treated produced an average of one steer to the acre, and a gain of 200 pounds per steer. A heavier field of similar land produced 400 pounds per steer, and in the same season produced 600 pounds per steer.