

RESTITUTION

BIBLE TEXT : Leviticus 6:2-5; Numbers 5:6-8; Ezekiel 33:14-16;
Matthew 5:23, 24; Luke 19:8, 9

LESSON 269 **Junior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Leviticus 6:2-5

² If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the LORD, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour;

³ Or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein:

⁴ Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found,

⁵ Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, *and* give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering.

Numbers 5:6-8

⁶ Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty;

⁷ Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth *part* thereof, and give *it* unto *him* against whom he hath trespassed.

⁸ But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto,

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Under the Sycamore Tree

The Jericho Road is thronging with eager men, women, and children. Looking down the road we see a sycamore tree which has leaves much like the mulberry tree. We see Jesus leading a company of people toward that spot. Suddenly, darting past the crowd, comes the well-known figure of our local tax collector, Zacchæus. He stops under the tree, reaches for a limb and swings himself off the ground. He is a man who is not concerned about what people think of him — his chief concern is wealth.

But this day is different: perhaps his office is locked — taxes can wait. He must see what is attracting the great crowd who passed his place of business. Now, looking down from among the leaves, his eyes are met by a pair of eyes that see far beyond the outward appearance of this "wee, little man." Into the deep, hidden thoughts, desires, ambitions, plans, and hopes of his own true self, pierce the eyes of the Son of God. As if suddenly overwhelmed with condemnation — then repentance, hunger, longing, surprise, and lastly, joy that knows no bounds — Zacchæus jumps to the ground with the words, "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8).

Joyfully he received Jesus into his heart as Saviour and Redeemer; joyfully, too, he received Jesus as a Guest into his home. How mistaken were the people who said that Jesus had gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner! No longer was Zacchæus a child of Abraham by birth only, for he was now also a child of Abraham by faith.

No more sleepless nights for Zacchæus, with a conscience condemning him for ill-gotten gains. Like all tax collectors for the Roman government, he was no doubt hated because of the great amount of graft in this agency. Now that Jesus had forgiven him, he also wanted to be forgiven by man. He was familiar with the Roman law, which required one who had wronged another to restore fourfold; the Jewish law asked that the principal and a fifth more be restored. He showed his willingness to "go all the way" by his prompt statement, "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." So great was the change in the life of this once tight-fisted tax collector that he gave the half of his fair gains to help the poor, and his ill-gotten gains he paid back fourfold.

Wrongs Made Right

This incident in the life of one who made right his past wrongs sets forth the fact that restitution is required by God at salvation. When Jesus comes into a heart, He at once creates a desire in that heart to restore the goods one has stolen, ask forgiveness for lies told, and make right all wrongs. Often when a sinner comes to the altar and seeks salvation, his past wrongs come up before him one at a time. If he promises God that he will make it all straight, the Blood of Jesus covers his heart and he receives

let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, *even* to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him.

Ezekiel 33:14-16

¹⁴ Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

¹⁵ *If* the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

¹⁶ None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

Matthew 5:23-24

²³ Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

²⁴ Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Luke 19:8-9

⁸ And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.

⁹ And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

forgiveness for sin, as far as Heaven is concerned. Then, as soon as possible, he should "restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity" (Ezekiel 33:15). Jesus will also forgive those things, which are absolutely impossible for one to straighten up.

In the Old Testament times, under the Law, if a person committed a trespass — told a lie, deceived another, swore falsely, took something which did not belong to him, found something that was lost and lied about it — he should make right his wrong by restoring the article and adding a fifth part more unto it. Then he should take a ram without blemish out of his flock and go to the priest who would make atonement for him before the Lord. "And it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein" (Leviticus 6:7). So we see that it was necessary for him first to be reconciled with his brother before coming to God with his offering.

Forgiven by God and Man

Let us try to picture in our mind a scene in the Temple of long-ago days. We see an Israelite with his animal by his side. He enters the court of the Israelites where he waits for the priest to receive his sacrifice. It will be taken and slain, then presented upon the altar of sacrifice. He desires forgiveness, and in all sincerity he stands there, perhaps waiting in line. At this solemn moment he suddenly remembers that a brother has a complaint against him. Does he say, "As soon as I have offered this sacrifice I shall go at once to my brother and make it up to him"? No indeed! He leaves the offering before the altar and goes to his brother and makes right any difference that may exist between them.

That is the basis upon which their offerings were accepted before God in early days; and today we cannot expect Jesus to forgive us if we are unwilling to make right, as far as lies within our power, every wrong that has been committed against another. If we cannot love our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen? Jesus said, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24).

How we especially search our hearts just before partaking of the Lord's Supper! God's people are very particular that there is nothing between them and a brother and nothing between their soul and the Saviour. We must at all times have a "conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16), which means that there will be no condemnation upon our heart.

Just suppose that the Bible said nothing about restitution. Would not your own conscience tell you that you must return what you have stolen? or pay for the article, if you desire to have a record clear to mansions in the skies? Would not your own heart whisper to you that you had to confess those lies in order to be clear of guilt?

Restitution includes not only making right matters of money, such as theft, dishonest gains, and unpaid bills; but also confessing lies, slanderous reports, unjust criticisms, hatred, and malice — those things in which one may have injured others in word or deed. You may say, "My brother does not know that I talked evil of him." But what about the person to whom you talked! Undoubtedly you harmed him, and perhaps he repeated it to others. You should go to the one **to** whom you talked and confess it. Wrongs will either be made right in this world or they

will be faced in the world to come. We had better face them here while the great "Counsellor," who never lost a case, can go before us and soften the heart of those whom we wronged. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgement; and some men they follow after" (I Timothy 5:24).

Answering the Call

The eyes of the Lord behold the one who is seeking for truth and right, and His heart yearns and His Spirit calls and knocks at the heart's door of the one who longs to see Jesus eagerly enough to make an effort. Zacchæus made haste to come to Jesus. That is the way to receive things from Jesus – do what He says and do it at once. The boy Samuel answered immediately, "Here am I." Abraham, too, quickly replied, "Here am I." Isaiah's answer was, "Here am I; send me." There are some who are answering the call of the Spirit in these last days. How about you? Has your name been called? Have you answered the voice of the Spirit and said, "I'll turn from my sin, and do that which is lawful and right; I'll restore the pledge, give again that which I have robbed; I'll walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity"? All who do this have the promise that "he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezekiel 33:14, 15). Everlasting life awaits those who meet all God's requirements.

QUESTIONS

1. What does the Bible say about finding lost articles?
2. Should stolen articles be returned to the owner?
3. If your brother has something against you, should you wait until he comes to you to make it right?
4. Tell how Zacchæus made his restitution.
5. Is it necessary that lies be confessed?
6. What does it mean to be "a son of Abraham"?
7. Are we sons of Abraham?
8. Can we expect to go to Heaven if we do not make all wrongs right?