



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #29: "God as Your Partner"

God's Treasurers

As we continue to study the Bible, we see new glimpses of how loving and trustworthy God is. By His own example in giving His only Son to die for man, God has shown us His love. By Jesus' strict adherence to a "Thus saith the Lord" and having complete confidence in His Father's care for Him while He lived here on earth, He gave us the perfect example of trust.

In the beginning, man was created in God's image. He, too, was loving and trustworthy. But through sin man became selfish, greedy, and dishonest. Because God wants to have mankind live with Him in heaven once again, but knows that man will not be in harmony with the spirit of heaven with his self-centered traits of character, He has designed a plan to help man develop once again the love and trust he was created with. Our lesson today reveals this plan, but first we would like to share with you the experiences of some who have gained a blessing as they have learned how to be loving and trustworthy again.

The Secret of William's Success

Many years ago, a lad of sixteen left home to seek his fortune. All his worldly possessions were tied up in a bundle that he carried in his hand. As he trudged along, he met an old neighbor, the captain of a canal boat.

"Well, William, where are you going?"

"I don't know," he answered. "Father is too poor to keep me at home any longer, and says I must now make a living for myself."

"There's no trouble about that," said the captain. "Be sure you start right, and you'll get along fine."

William told his friend that the only trade he knew anything about was soap and candle making, at which he had helped his father while at home.

"Well," said the captain, "let me pray with you, and give you a little advice, before you go." They both kneeled upon the towpath, the path where the horses that drew the canal boat walked, and the old man prayed earnestly for William.

"Some one will soon be the leading soap maker of New York," he said, after they had risen from prayer. "It can be you as well as anyone. I hope it may. Be a good man. Give your heart to Christ. Give the Lord all that belongs to Him of every dollar you earn. Make honest soap. Give a full pound. And I am certain you will be a great, good, and prosperous man."

When William arrived in the city, he found it hard to get work, but at last he was successful. Lonesome and far from home, he remembered his mother's words and the last words of the canal boat captain. He

Lesson 29: God as Your Partner

was then and there led to seek "first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." He united with the church. He remembered his promise to the old captain. The first dollar he earned brought up the question of the Lord's part. He studied the Bible, and found that the people of God were commanded to give the Lord one tenth of their increase.

"If the Lord will take one tenth," he said, "I will give that." And he did. Ten cents of every dollar was sacred to the Lord.

Years passed. William was industrious, faithful, and careful. He became one of the company's most valuable foremen. After that, he became manager. Finally, he was taken into the firm as junior member.

At last, both senior partners died, and William came to be the sole owner of the business. He now resolved anew to keep his promise to the old captain. He made honest soap, gave a full pound, and instructed his bookkeeper to open an account with the Lord, and carry one tenth of all his increase to that account.

He was prosperous. His business grew. His family was blessed. His soap sold, and he grew rich faster than he had ever dreamed. He then decided to give the Lord two-tenths. He prospered more than ever. Then he gave three-tenths; then four-tenths; then five-tenths. He then settled all his plans for life, and told the Lord he would give Him all his increase. He prospered more than ever.

This is a true story of Mr. Colgate, who has given millions of dollars to missions at home and abroad, and left a name that will be remembered as long as time shall last. Elizabeth Lou Baker (adapted).

Nearest His Heart

It was a long sermon, but no one minded. Benny hardly took his eyes from the missionary's face as he talked. His hands clasped together between his knees, he leaned forward to catch every word.

The kind-faced minister seemed to be looking straight at Benny when he asked, "Why should the children in America have all the good things, and the children in Africa all the poor things? I want to know if there isn't some little boy or girl here who would like to give just one of his blessings to one of those children over there?"

Benny's hand went up highest of all.

"You know," he went on to say, "some of us over here give the poor heathen only the things that we don't want, our old clothes, our old broken-up toys, or maybe a nickel left after we have bought all the ice cream and all the candy, and all the bicycles and baseballs and balloons and kites, and everything else we want. But you know, the things that help the most, the things that Jesus appreciates the most, are the things that we *sacrifice* to give—the things that lie nearest our hearts."

He paused, and in the tense silence Benny's throat clicked in a dry sob. When the last song, "I Gave My Life for Thee, What Hast Thou Given for Me?" was sung, Benny followed his grandfather out of the church.

On the sidewalk a big shepherd dog sprang up to meet him, and the boy's heart stood still. Instantly he knew what it was that he must give. "The thing that lies nearest our hearts," the minister had said. It would be Rex; he must give him to one of those poor heathen boys. The dog snuggled his nose into Benny's hand as he started home. Inside the church his heart had been aching, for he thought he had nothing to give. But what a glorious gift Rex would be for some little African boy. How thrilling to make such a gift!

Lesson 29: God as Your Partner

Grandfather looked down, and his old face wrinkled into a painful smile. "What ails you, Benny boy?" he asked in his high, cracked voice. "Thinking 'bout them black boys over in Africa?"

Benny raised shining eyes that were filled with tears.

Grandfather saw the tears, but his eyes did not detect the light shining from Benny's soul. He ruminated consolingly, "Well, Sonny, you an' me an' Mother have seen some pretty hard times, but I guess we ain't as bad off as the heathen yet. Got a heap to be thankful for, spite of it all.

They reached the edge of town, where their tiny brown house stood. Grandmother was waiting for them in the small bedroom where she had lain for several years. "Well, we are back, Mother," called Grandfather cheerfully.

A thin, small voice answered from her bed, "Lasted longer today, didn't it?"

"Quite a spell, Mother. There was a missionary from Africa a-tellin' all about the heathens and makin' a plea for help. Kinder touched our hearts, it did." He laid his worn Bible on the old dresser beside the bed, took off his shiny Sabbath coat, and hung it carefully on a nail behind the door.

"Benny and I were sayin' on the way home that we ain't so bad off compared to the Africans."

Benny changed his "good" clothes, and went out with Rex. They sat down together in the sunshine outside the door, and Benny felt again the missionary fever mounting in his breast.

"Rex, how'd you like to belong to a little black, naked, African boy?" he asked solemnly. Rex blinked and licked his hand, but those words were not in his vocabulary, broad though it was, so he maintained a polite silence while his master talked. The sermon was explained to him, and the wonderful dog seemed almost to understand what Benny said.

"So you see," he concluded, "you are the nearest to my heart, so you must go to Africa!"

They went into the house in answer to Grandfather's call to dinner, but Benny was not hungry for the first time in his nine years. He passed his cornbread down to Rex, who eagerly swallowed each piece and waited for more. Grandfather's nearly blind eyes did not notice the boy's lack of appetite. A kind woman from the church came in with a little Sabbath delicacy for the Grandmother, which she ate in bed.

Benny interrupted Grandfather's silent thinking. "Would the African's like a dog, Gramp?"

"What! A dog? No, my child, they have more dogs than they need now." Then, peering at the boy's face, he emphasized his remark. "No, Ben, you can't give 'em Rex. They can't feed the lot of good-for-nothin' dogs they have howlin' around 'em now."

But Rex was nearest to Benny's heart, and somehow he must go. The answer came almost at once. He could sell him and send the money. The surly old dog trainer who loved dogs and hated everything else had once asked Benny how much he would sell his beautiful dog for. There was no such thing as a price for Rex, not then. But now he would sell him for a thousand dollars, maybe, or a hundred. That much money ought to buy a lot of things for the black children who had only poor things.

Grandfather did not seem to notice the little boy's unusual quietness as he helped with their few dishes. As soon as the work was finished, he asked permission to go for a walk, and took his cap and hurried away, Rex trotting beside him.

They had gone but a few blocks when he began to realize what it would mean to give up his pal. He recalled how he had become the happy owner of this beautiful dog. A lady stopped at their humble little home two years ago, lifted a little puppy out of the back seat of her car, and asked Benny if she might let

Lesson 29: God as Your Partner

it run about a bit on the grass. She was, she explained, taking it to her mother, who lived in another town, but the motion of the car had made the puppy sick.

When she saw how tenderly Benny followed it with his eyes, she decided to leave it with him for a few days, promising to pay for the care of it. When she returned, Benny gave the little fellow into her hands with such touching reluctance that she suddenly thrust it back into his arms and told him to keep it for his own. He had not seen her since, but her generous gift had filled his two years with an unbelievably happy companionship.

At first Grandfather couldn't see how they could keep a dog, for it was all he could do to get enough food for themselves. But one look into his orphaned grandson's eyes and Grandfather gave in. He had had a dog when he was a boy. Kindly neighbors with sympathetic hearts had occasionally helped out on the food problem for the growing boy and dog.

Benny stopped on a street crossing, the sudden complete realization of his intentions paralyzing his legs for a moment. An automobile honked loudly and Rex gave Benny a violent shove toward the sidewalk. Nothing could happen to Benny while the dog was along. On they went, his steps lagging more and more as they neared the trainer's place.

The man who loved dogs was carrying water to the kennel when Benny walked into the yard. "Well, hello!" he said, stopping abruptly, a bucket in his hand. "How is the dog today?" He had always been rather friendly to Benny on account of Rex. Rarely did he allow the boys of the town to visit the kennels, and then more because he wanted to show off his dogs, than to be obliging. Ben was always welcome.

The boy spoke quickly, afraid to trust himself with any delay in stating his errand. "Would you like to buy him?"

"Buy him, sure I'll buy him. Do you want to sell him?"

Benny felt the fervor again, and raised his head proudly. "Yes, I want to send the money to Africa to help the heathen boys there."

"What's that? You want to send money to the heathen?" He muttered some oaths and turned to place his bucket on the ground.

Benny stood quietly unmoved, his eyes shining in spite of the misery in his heart. The trainer gave him a careful scrutiny, and then asked, "You really want to sell him? I'll be glad to have him, of course, but you'll be back for him by morning. "

"No, I'll not," Benny shook his head. "The minister said that it didn't mean much unless we gave what was nearest our hearts. I love Rex almost more than I do Gramp and Grams so I want to give him. You let me have the money, and I'll take it to the minister."

The dog trainer looked at the boy again closely and shrugged his shoulders in indifference. "Well," he said, "you are only a boy. I'll not argue with you. If you really want to sell your dog, I'll take him." He reached into his pocket and handed Benny a crisp bill. The dog was worth many times the amount of the bill, but the man was sure the boy would be back and did not want more money involved.

Benny put the bill into his pocket, and then knelt beside his pet. How he loved him! Many times he had gone hungry that Rex might not miss a dinner. The big dog seemed to sense some trouble. He whined and licked Benny's face. The boy took the huge dog's head between his hands and looked into his soft brown eyes, and then, with a sob, turned and ran out of the enclosure and down the street. Rex's bark followed him until his sound failed to penetrate the distance.

Lesson 29: God as Your Partner

Benny crept into the house. Grandfather lay back in his chair, taking his afternoon nap. The little boy, who had given his all, lay down on the floor behind the old kitchen stove, where Rex had slept for the last two years. No sleep came, but tears streamed down his cheeks.

Twilight came. Grandfather awoke with a start and shouted to Benny to come help do the chores. The cow must be milked and the milk delivered. The chickens must be fed and put away for the night. It was when he came back to the house and saw that Grandfather had filled Rex's pan with milk that he sobbed out his story.

"Well, well, well," the old man said slowly, "so you sold Rex to help the Africans. Well, well, well!" He sat down on the old bench outside the kitchen door. Benny crouched at his feet. The man thought of the martyrdom and the sacrifice of the ages while the small boy sobbed himself to sleep

The next morning Benny was coming with slow steps from the woodshed, when Rex bounded onto his shoulders. They greeted each other with sobs and barks of delight. The dog trainer stood by the gate waiting for Benny's attention. Finally he asked, "Well, son, do you still want to sell your dog?"

Benny stood up and lifted his haggard face to the man. All his loneliness had been swept away. He had forgotten that Rex was no longer his. The expression in his eyes was pitiful to see. "Oh, why did you bring him?" He fell upon Rex's neck crying uncontrollably.

The profane dog trainer laid his hand on the heaving shoulder.

"My boy," he began, "I sat up all last night beside Rex's kennel, trying to comfort him. I got to thinking. I don't believe much in God nor in foreign missions, but a minister who can make a boy give up a dog like Rex, must have something to tell to the world. So I'm going to let you give the money to the heathen, and you can have your dog, too. You can't sell him. He is part of your family. I may drop into church some day and listen to that minister."

He went away quickly, and left Benny looking entirely bewildered, one arm thrown tightly about the big dog's neck.

God and Miss Clancy's Tithe

By Carlyle B. Haynes

One summer I conducted a series of evangelistic meetings in a large tent at Ninety-fifth Street and Broadway, New York City. To these meetings came an elderly lady who was introduced to me as Miss Clancy. She was from Northern Ireland, a Protestant, and strongly Calvinistic in her belief.

I do not recall meeting anyone who displayed a more positive confidence in the Bible. She required nothing more than a clear "Thus saith the Lord" for instant acceptance of any truth.

In these meetings I delivered two sermons on tithing, making plain from the Bible that this requirement was for all who served God.

It was soon evident that she was disturbed. Her usual cheerful disposition was gone. She came to me and asked for an interview, which, of course, was gladly arranged.

"Pastor, your sermon on tithing has caused me deep concern, and I need counsel to know what the Lord would have me to do.

"Is there something that is not clear?"

"Oh, pastor, it's not that. It's clear enough. That's the trouble. I know what the Bible says. What plagues me is whether it means me, and if it means me, how in the wide world I am to do what it says?"

Lesson 29: God as Your Partner

"Just what do you mean about whether it means you?"

"I mean, can it possibly include anyone in my circumstances?"

"Well, Miss Clancy, of course-"

"Wait a minute, pastor. Don't answer me until you have the whole story. You don't know my circumstances. Before you tell me anything just hear what they are, and then tell me whether you think the Lord would have me pay tithe."

"Very well, Miss Clancy; I am listening."

"I am a lone woman, pastor. I have no folks in this country except a niece who lives with her husband in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He has no obligation to take care of me, but he does. What he sends me each week is all the income I have."

"Do you care to tell me how much he sends you?"

"Six dollars a week."*

"How can you manage on that?"

"All, that's it, how do I manage? I don't know how, but somehow the dear Lord makes it cover my needs, praise Him."

"Where do you live?"

"In a kitchenette apartment. I moved into it years ago when rents were lower, and the blessed landlord has not raised mine. I think he is sorry for me."

"How much of your \$6 does your rent take?"

"It takes \$4.50."

"Do you mean that all you have for food, clothing, and other necessities is \$1.50 a week?"

"Sure, and that's what I mean."

"But it cannot be done."

"Sure, and I'm doing it. And I can go on doing it. Only now you come along and tell me I must tithe my \$6. And look where that leaves me."

"But I did not tell you that, Miss Clancy. It was the Lord who has cared for you all these years who told you. It is in His Book. I only showed it to you."

"Oh, I know that, but it comes to the same thing so far as I am concerned. What I am after is whether He means I should pay tithe."

"Why do you think He would make an exception?"

This story took place in the early 1900s.

"Well, pastor, don't you see what this would mean to me? If I start paying tithe, that takes 60 cents out of my \$6 to begin with. My rent remains unchanged. That with the tithe comes to \$5.10. And I have 90 cents to live on. And for a week, pastor, for a week! Now that you know what this means to me, do you think the Lord would have me pay tithe?"

Lesson 29: God as Your Partner

My first impulse was to say, "No, Miss Clancy, I do not think He means this for you. I am strongly of the opinion that the Lord and His work will manage to get along somehow without your 60 cents a week. Just keep it, and I'll try to do something to make things a bit easier for you."

But I did not say it. I was prevented from saying it by the insistent thought, "Who are you to set aside a command of God?"

So I said, "Miss Clancy, all I can do is to point you to God's Book and His wonderful promise, and then encourage you to do as He says and trust Him to make the impossible possible. My advice is for you to do what God tells you to do and begin at once to pay tithe."

For the first time Miss Clancy smiled. Cheerfully she said, "I'll do what you say, pastor, for I think it's good counsel. It will not be the first time I have trusted God. If He fails me, well, it will be the first time that will have happened. "

"He will not fail you, Miss Clancy."

"Sure, and well I know that. Goodbye for now, pastor, and thank you."

The following week Miss Clancy handed me 60 cents. No money I ever received was harder to take. But, I thought, I'll let the Lord manage this and not interfere. So the 60 cents was turned over to the church treasurer and a receipt returned to Miss Clancy.

Week after week she brought her 60 cents. Once or twice I leaned over to whisper in her ear, "Are you getting along all right, Miss Clancy?"

"Praise God, I am," she replied happily.

The third time I made this inquiry, she added, "Pastor, something strange has taken place. The neighbors never before did the things they do now. "

"What things?"

"Why, they bring me little presents—a loaf of bread, a pound of butter, flour, cereal, a quart of milk, fruit, and even cake. I really think I am getting along better on my 90 cents a week than I ever did on that dollar and a half.

"Do you think there is somebody who has put the neighbors up to this?"

"Sure and I do."

"Who?"

"Need you ask, pastor? The good Lord has not forgotten me, and He has not forgotten His promise. If you had not counseled me as you did, you would have robbed me of God's blessing."

Three or four months later Miss Clancy knocked on the door of my study, and, when bidden, came in with a flounce and a playful smile on her face. She stood silently for a moment in front of my desk and then said, "Pastor, you are looking at a woman with means, a woman of wealth. Sure, and you must show me the proper respect."

"Sit down, Miss Clancy, and tell me what has happened."

"Sure, and it's as I say. I have more money than I know what to do with. You will remember that I told you of that blessed nephew-by marriage of mine in Connecticut? Well, this week he wrote me a letter. In it he said, 'I've felt for some time, Auntie, that you must have a hard time getting along on \$6, and I've wanted to send you more. Now I can do it, for I have just had a raise in wages. You will find \$10 in this, and there will be \$10 every week from now on.'

Lesson 29: God as Your Partner

"Dear Miss Clancy," I said, "this makes me happy. I'm very glad."

"I knew you would be, pastor. But do you realize what this means? Do you see what God has done? Why, now, my tithe will be \$1 a week, no less. My rent remains \$4.50. And that leaves for myself \$4.50.

"Pastor, are you good at arithmetic? How much more is \$4.50 than 90 cents?"

"Five times as much."

"You see, there it is! Five times more for me than I have had before. Five times, mind you! Sure, I don't know what to do with all my money! I've been thinking I can now do more for these mission calls than I've been able to do before. Ah, pastor, the Book says the windows of heaven will open and a blessing come, too great to receive. That's what the good Lord has done for me. Aye, the windows of heaven are open upon me. You told me He would never fail me. Nor has He. It's a happy woman I am, this day.

And you, reader? Do you care to put God to the test? "Prove me now herewith," He invites. "Herewith" has reference to tithing. "Prove me" by paying tithe, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there will not be room to receive it.

That blessing awaits only your obedience in this matter of tithing. As God was faithful with Miss Clancy, so will He be faithful with you.