

Classroom and Hall.

International S.S. Lesson.

LESSON VIII.—NOVEMBER 19.—EPH. iv. 20-32.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS.—This matchless epistle was written while Paul was a prisoner at Rome, A.D. 62, to a people where he resided three years and fully preached the Gospel. Acts xix. 1-10, xx. 31.

We have the keynote in the words, "Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." i. 3. Such expressions as, "In Christ," "in him," "in whom," occur more than one hundred times.

The first three chapters are doctrinal, the last three practical: one giving the heavenly position, i. 3; ii. 6; xix. 20; iii. 11, 12, and the other the earthly condition, iv. 1; v. 1; vi. 10, of Him who is in Christ. It finds us seated "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," ii. 6. It leaves us standing as a soldier in the conflict, vi. 13-18.

The Ephesians are a type of the Church universal, founded on the will of the Father, i. 4, bought by the blood of the Son, ii. 13, whose end is life in the Spirit, i. 13; ii. 18; iii. 16; iv. 3; v. 18; vi. 18.

Here we have the Church as the bride of whom Christ is the bridegroom, v. 25-33.

Seven times the Church is referred to as the "body" of which Christ is "the Head," i. 22, 23; ii. 16; iv. 4, 12, 16; v. 23, 30.

Here Paul's revelations reach the "summit of sublimity." He soars from the depths of ruin to the heights of redemption. It is the third heaven Epistle.

It is sad to remember that there is no Church at Ephesus now. The "candlestick" has been removed "out of his place," Rev. ii. 15. It is possible for the light of the Christian teacher to go out in darkness.

CENTRAL THOUGHT.—Christlikeness is not mere imitation of Christ. Imitation is mechanical. The statue may be a copy of the human figure. The divine conceptions of Raphael and Hiram Powers force the ages into wondering admiration. The lines are soft and perfect, the symmetry ravishing, the finished form standing out majestically like the work of Omnipotence; yet it lacks much. It is cold, unresponsive and motionless. Its heart is quiescent, its eye unkindled. Upon the canvas the colours lend warmth; yet the most thrilling compositions of a Guido or a Millet are after all but paint and cotton. Life is something God given and unique! It palpitates, it glows, the invisible current of its blessedness streaming out to the borders of creation, glorious, unmistakable.

Imitation is automatic and external. It may be the exact counterpart of the original, yet we shall miss that great essential, life.

We can discover at once the impassable gulf stretching between natural and artificial flowers. At a distance the distinction is not evident, but the fragrance, the rare and exquisite texture and hue which God only can confer, is absent. We have seen peaches and watermelons so realistic the lips parted to receive them, yet we knew they were only plaster and paint.

Now, there are what we might denominate automatic Christians. They are imitators of Jesus yet destitute of His Spirit. They are coldly exact. Their words and deeds emptied of the ineffable element of love. You have seen such people, apparently outwardly faultless, yet frigid. The ball has no powder behind it, or, having, lacks the divine spark to set it off and make it effective. You do not know where the difficulty is, you are simply aware that they do not move you. The sentences of another sink to the deepest sanctuary of your soul. We marvel at the power of Phillips Brooks, who was able to throng the isles of his church from his young manhood, yet who was not an orator.

It is entirely impossible for a wicked man to do noble things. He may copy the saint as the child does the written form which is set before him by his teacher; but his life will lack one thing—love. He may give money to the poor, minister to the sick, support the Church, speak

and pray in religious meetings, even attend the Holy Supper, and yet be godless and unloving. This is imitation. The divinity of life is not in his conduct, and that divinity is love.

OBJECT LESSON FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS.—Subject: Christian Unity. "We are members one of another," v. 25, "being fitly joined together," v. 16. The Golden Text. Illustrate by the ordinary tub. Several small tubs would be better still. Show the tub to the children and ask them what it is, and what it is for. Now all Christians, or the Church of Christ are like this tub.

Will you tell me what one thing all good tubs must have? Yes, a bottom. Just so we must all have a foundation, or one on whom we can build our spiritual house, and one to whom we can go for aid in time of trouble, and for strength in time of temptation. This one we call our foundation, and is Christ. He is the only foundation. There are many people in this world who are banded together in associations and societies, but they have no true foundation, because they do not love and serve Jesus, and they do not look to Him for comfort and happiness. They are like this poor little tub without any bottom.

All tubs also must have staves, and they must be fastened to the bottom. Here are one or two little staves that do not go down below the first hoop on the tub. They are not joined to the bottom. This tub could not hold any water could it? It would all leak out. This is like the church which has boys and girls and others in it who have not been born again of the Holy Spirit. In other words, they are not joined to Jesus as their Saviour, and so they just hinder the work of the church, as this little broken stove ruins the tub.

Do you not remember how Joshua and the army of the children of Israel marched around the city of Jericho and the walls fell down to the ground? But just after that, when the children of Israel went out to fight another battle, a small number of their enemies defeated them and turned them back in great confusion. The whole army of Israel was disgraced and met their first defeat, just because one man by the name of Achan had taken a wedge of gold and a Babylonian garment from Jericho, when God had told the people not to touch anything. They had to destroy Achan and his whole family before God would give them the victory. So those who are members of the church and are not truly loving the Saviour only hinder the work, and they must either give God their heart and have Him wash away their sins, or must get out of the church.

In the ancient Theban army they had a band made up of all the different regiments. It was called the "Holy band," because they had sworn to live and die for each other. Oh that the boys and girls in this Sabbath school might be pledged to love and help each other! Let us drive down the bands of love, and get all these bad holes out from between our hearts, and then we shall be just like this perfect little tub which you can fill with water and not one drop will leak through. So the Holy Spirit of Christ can come and fill all our hearts, when we are fitly joined together, and have the bands of love driven down tightly.

PRACTICAL POINTS.

We cannot learn Christ and love wickedness, vs. 20-22.

Christ is both teacher and lesson, v. 20.

To learn Him is to know truth, for He is Truth, v. 21.

If you would put on the new man, first put off the old man, vs. 23-24.

A divine energy is the source of all holy living, v. 24.

Think true, speak true, live true, v. 25.

To be angry and not sin is to be angry at nothing but sin, v. 26.

If anger burn into wrath suppress it speedily, v. 26.

Lacking a "place" the devil has no foothold to strike, v. 27.

The devil cannot enter your heart without permission, v. 27.

The alms acceptable to God are the product of honest industry, v. 28.

A Christian should imitate Christ, v. 32.