

Classroom and Hall.

International S.S. Lesson.

LESSON VII.—NOVEMBER 12.—2 Cor. viii. 1-12.

THE GRACE OF LIBERALITY.

INTRODUCTION.—The Christians in Jerusalem, through war, famine and persecutions, were poor. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, had a tender regard for the Jewish Christians, and stirred up the Gentile Christians to give liberally for their relief. He stimulates the Corinthians to give by telling them how the Macedonians gave (1) They gave themselves (vs. 1-5); (2) Gave amid affliction and poverty (v. 2); (3) With abundant joy (v. 2); (4) Beyond their ability (v. 3); (5) Not waiting to be asked (v. 3); (6) Urging their gifts on others (v. 4). Paul appealed to (1) their Christian character (v. 7); (2) Example of others (v. 8); (3) Example of Christ (v. 9); (4) Their own promises (vs. 10, 11); (5) Hope of reward (v. 12); (6) The relationship of brethren (v. 14).

GOLDEN TEXT ILLUSTRATED.—"He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—2 Cor. viii. 9. The Son of God became "the carpenter's son." Matt. xiii. 55. He who was the centre of attraction, the most glorious of all the glories of heaven, became a helpless babe. "There was no room for them in the inn." Luke ii. 7. This money-worshipping world has had "no room" for Jesus ever since. He who was the world's Creator became the rejected of the world. John i. 11. In His babyhood He was hunted like a wild beast. Matt. ii. 13, 14. He who was infinitely above Rome's emperor had for His home the despised village of Nazareth. John i. 46. He who had spoken into existence and beauty the heavens and earth, earned His bread by the sweat of His face at the carpenter's bench. Mark vi. 3. He who had lain upon the bosom of the Father became so poor that "he had not where to lay his head." Matt. viii. 20. He who had thousands of holy angels eager to serve Him became the servant of all and pleased not Himself. Mark x. 45. He became poor that He might sympathize and preach to the poor. Luke iv. 18. He descended into the lowest depths of poverty and anguish, that He might exalt us to the greatest heights of riches and enjoyment. He was scourged (Mark xv. 15) that we might be honoured. Eph. ii. 6. He was mocked (Luke xxiii. 11) that we might be praised. 1 Cor. iv. 5. He was clothed in purple (Mark xv. 17) that we might be clothed in the pure white garment of His righteousness. Rev. xix. 8. He was crowned with thorns (Mark xv. 17) that we might wear the incorruptible crown (1 Cor. ix. 25, 27), the crown of glory (1 Pet. v. 4), the crown of life (Rev. ii. 10), the crown of righteousness (2 Ti. iv. 8), and the crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. ii. 19). At last when we meet Him face to face in His triumphant glory and see the back that was scourged, the hands and feet that were pierced, the brow that was crowned with thorns, the side from which flowed the blood, and hear the voice that cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" and "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do"—we shall fall down before Him, cast our crowns at His feet and cry, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power!" Rev. iv. 11.

CENTRAL THOUGHT.—We have here a lesson in economics a subject eminently practical. It defines the secret of wealth, the hidden impulse of saintly living. It shows how to win the race of life and grasp the sceptre and crown. The reader may begin this hour, his next utterance and act may be a sacrifice for others. As the seed reproduces itself a thousand-fold, so each kind and tender deed will jewel the soul and paint the light of heaven upon the countenance. Like your Saviour, you will pass all the way marks of the divine journey. You will be weary by the sea and among the hills, faint yet persevering till the mists of Calvary are dissipated by the radiance of the resurrection morning. To suffer is to grow strong, to expend is to receive, to confer love, joy and peace is to acquire it. This statement is anomalous yet true; it is the lesson ever learned anew, over which the world stumbles, yet is the way the Redeemer trod, and must be the straight and narrow way of his followers.

OBJECT LESSONS FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS.—Subject: *Liberality.* Hold up a rose or any other flower and ask the children if any of them can tell what benefit the rose is to us. Some may be able to tell you that it benefits us by its beauty and by its perfume. This the rose gives to us. Then you can show an apple or some other fruit, and ask what the fruit gives us. This gives us food, and so makes us happy and healthful and able to work. Show pictures of sheep, or cows, or horses, and ask what these various animals give us. The sheep gives us wool for clothing, also itself for food. The birds give us their songs and their beautiful feathers. You might ask what the grass, and air and water give us. All these things in nature, and the plants, and the animals seem to give us something.

Who is it that sews for us, and cared for us when we were little children, too small to take care of ourselves? Yes, mother. What other things do our parents give us? Let the children raise their hands and answer one after another.

You see that not only the flowers, and the grass, and the animals are givers, but our parents are givers, too. Who is the Greatest giver of all? Yes, God. Tell some of the things God gives us. Call out one after another some of the things such as food, clothing, health, life, etc. But the best of all is that He gives us Himself. He became poor that we through His poverty might become rich. And after He had suffered all the poverty He was called to go through in this world, and the pain and anguish of dying on the cross and after His resurrection from the tomb, He ascended on high, and there He continues to give. All the time He suppli us with our breath and everything which is good for us to have.

Now, you see the one who gives the most to others is most like God, for He gives more than any one else. Are you little boys and girls giving others something, or are you letting others give to you, and you not trying to give? I am sure you can be like this little rose and give out sweetness. I heard of a sick woman one time who did not seem to be able to go around and do anything for others, but she loved Jesus much. So during all her sickness she was cheerful and seemed like a ray of sunshine to every one about her. "For," she said, "I cannot work for Jesus, but I can smile and be happy for Him."

That is just what you little boys and girls can do in your homes. If you cannot give anything else you can smile and be happy for Jesus. That is what the beautiful flowers seem to do. That is what the birds do. They seem to be so happy. They give us their songs which show how happy they are. If you sing around home, I am sure it will cheer your tired mother many times, when possibly she is having so much trouble that you do not know about. And it will be a great comfort to papa when he comes home from business to hear you singing and see you singing. You will be a little giver.

Some boys and girls are pettish and cry because they cannot have all to their minds. But do not let the flowers get ahead of you because they give more than you. There are some people in this world who seem to do nothing but take, and they take without even thanking you.

Above all things give yourselves to the service of God. That is the very best thing that you can give him. Little boys and girls cannot do much, but God is just as pleased to have them give Him their lives as though they were men and women. Let all the boys and girls try to see how much they can give others this week.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- I. Liberality is a divine gift and heavenly grace.
- II. No person is so poor that he should deny himself the privilege of giving something.
- III. Giving should be free, glad, spontaneous.
- IV. Giving should be proportionate and systematic.
- V. The blessing is not in proportion to the amount given, but the cost to the giver.
- VI. A liberal spirit is essential to the best, the happiest, the most truly successful life.
- VII. Christ's great gift to us should inspire us to give all we can to him.
- VIII. The noble deeds of others should arouse us to noble deeds.