

INCIDENTAL TRUTHS AND TEACHINGS.

Knowledge without love is ignorance.

Let us not despise the weakest of God's people.

Happy the man in whose heart love and knowledge is joined.

Love the measure of sacrifice.

Personal rights should not be allowed to weigh against the welfare of others.

The body is of more consequence than a single member.

The disciple should seek to follow the Master in the path of sacrifice for others.

Main Lesson.—Self-denial the law of Christ's kingdom.—Luke 9: 23; 21: 4; Acts 20: 24; Rom. 9: 13; Chap. 14, throughout.

LESSON 5.

May 4,
1884.

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

{ 1 Cor.
{ 13: 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Love is the fulfilling of the law."

TIME.—
PLACE.— } As lessons 3 and 4.

Notes and Comments.—Vers. 1.—The apostle had referred to "a more excellent way" in the last verse of the preceding chapter, and he now proceeds to dwell upon it. "Tongues:" the gift of tongues, of which some were so proud. "Or angels:" as they are of a higher order than men, so their speech, whatever its nature, is of a higher character. "Have not charity:" REV. reads "love" throughout the chapter. "Charity," as we understand it, forbearance, or ministering to the wants of others, cannot be meant, for vers. 3 supposes such a charity as worthless. "Sounding brass—tinkling cymbals." sound and nothing more.

Vers. 2. A further contrasting of gifts with love—"prophecy:" speaking by the inspiration of God; not of necessity, though perhaps including it, prophecy in our sense of foretelling. "Mysteries:" divine truths, the deep things of God, hidden from other men. "Knowledge:" of natural and revealed truths. "Faith—mountains"—as Matt. 17: 20; 21: 26. "Have not charity:" men, as Balaam, may have spiritual gifts, and yet be destitute of the grace of God in the heart. Such, in relation to God's kingdom, are "nothing."

Ver. 3. Having spoken of gifts, he now enumerates graces, which may exist without love. "Bestow all my goods:" no charity can be larger than this. "Body to be burned:" in self-sacrifice for others, or defence of the truth, profiteth nothing. These may be done in ostentation, or in a fanatical, defiant spirit, altogether void of the Spirit of the Master.

Ver. 4. Having shown how worthless gifts and sacrifices are, if without the spirit of love, the apostle now goes on to describe it. Compare here the fruits of wisdom, as described by James, in his Epistle, Chap. 3: 17: "suffereth long;" with obstinacy, injury, spite, and malice; "is kind:" the positive of long suffering, not only bears evil, but gives good; "envieth not;" is not jealous, never vexed at the success of others; "vaunteth not;" displays not itself, as *Alford* paraphrases, "not puffed up;" or conceited; it is closely connected with the preceding expression.

Ver. 5. "Unseemly:" a teacher will find plenty of illustrations of this—disrespect to parents is one. "Not her own:" happy in the happiness of others, how different from the worldly motto: "Take care of number one." "Not easily provoked:" REV. omits "easily;" is not moved to anger. "Thinketh no evil:" a grand feature this, not to impute or even suppose, evil motives for the

actions of anyone. If the hand is open, love sees an open heart; if the hand is closed, love believes that is because of closed means.

Ver. 6. "Rejoiceth not in iniquity:" when men do wrong, with an "I told you so," "I knew how it would be," etc., or, in the prevalence of iniquity of any kind. "In the truth:" in its success and power.

Ver. 7. "Beareth:" or, as in margin of REV., "covereth:" would rather hide an evil deed than trumpet it abroad. "Believeth" so long as it is possible, and when that is impossible, still "hopeth." "Endureth:" all the evils that come from wicked men, opposition or even persecution, so Rom. 8: 7.

Ver. 8. Love is now contrasted with gifts as to its abiding character; "never faileth:" because it is of God. "God is love." Prophecies—fail—tongues—cease—knowledge—vanishes away—prophecies have been fulfilled, and so are past; tongues did not survive long even in the primitive church, and knowledge while it may last the world out, will not be needed in heaven.

Vers. 9, 10. "In part:" all our knowledge is partial and imperfect, and in the inspired utterances of that day only a part of the truth was revealed. "Perfect is come:" when the Lord shall come, so ver. 12. "Done away:" imperfect knowledge by perfect, as the law by the Gospel; all the things that have been mentioned, tongues, prophecies, knowledge, will be unneeded in the light of Christ's presence.

Ver. 11. Gifts and charity are here compared to childhood and manhood—the former belong to the infancy of the Church, the latter to its maturity; the thoughts and feelings of a child belong to the child alone, not to the man. When manhood is reached, "I have put away childish things:" so REV.; so the gifts which the Corinthians prized so much would be as childish things in the world to come.

Ver. 12. "A glass darkly:" the mirrors of those days were of polished metal, and the reflection was indistinct, hence the metaphor; in the gospel we see God and the things of God, the gospel of His grace yet but imperfectly, "then:" when? in that future of which Paul had had a foretaste, and which was so real to him 2 Cor. 12: 2 3. "Face to face:" comp. Numbers 12: 8; "know in part:" the wisest know but little. Sir Isaac Newton compared himself to a boy playing on the sea shore, and diverting himself by now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before him. "As I am known:" seeing God face to face we should know Him as He knows us, perfectly.

Ver. 13. "Now abideth:" let us not overlook this. "Faith—hope—" these equally with "charity:" hope will never be lost "in full fruition," but will blossom eternally; faith will never finally "vanish into sight;" it will abide, as a continuing, ever present, trust in God. "The greatest:" not only greater than gifts, but than things far more excellent than gifts. God is never said to be faith or hope, but He is said to be love. Faith and hope lead to heaven, love is Heaven, for love is God.

HINTS TO TEACHERS.

Prefatory.—It has been well said that our lesson is one of those matchless passages in which inspiration itself seems newly inspired. We hesitate by what name to call the glorious theme. *Charity*, the old version calls it; *Love* is the better word but this must be sanctified in our thought. It is the same word so constantly translated *Love* as when John tells us in his first Epistle: "God is Love:" and "we love Him because He first loved us:" we see in a moment that it would not do to substitute the word *Charity*, and it is only because we have been so long