



LESSON VI.—MAY 7.

The Vine and the Branches.

John xv., 1-11.—Memory verses, 6-8. Compare John xvi., 16; Matt. vii., 16-20.

Golden Text.

'I am the vine, ye are the branches.'—John xv., 15.

Home Readings.

M. John xv., 1-11.—The Vine and the Branches.

T. I. John ii., 1-9.—Saying and doing.

W. I. John iii., 18-24.—Proof of abiding in Christ.

T. Matt. vii., 15-23.—Known by fruit.

F. Gal. v., 16-26.—Spiritual fruit.

S. Rom. xii., 1-5.—One in Christ.

S. Eph. vi., 1-16.—Christ the Head.

Lesson Story.

Christ and his disciples were just going out to the garden of Gethsemane, but the Lord had yet more to say to his loved ones. In his great love and sympathy for them he had comforted them with the assurance of their salvation and the promise of his speedy return, now he teaches them the necessity of continuous and absolute dependence upon him, their everliving Saviour.

In the beautiful figure of the grape vine and its branches and fruit, Christ explains to his followers what it means to depend upon him. He is Life. He is the eternal source of life to all believers. He is the vine giving life to all the branches and causing them to bring forth fruit.

Jehovah is the husbandman or owner of the vineyard. He it is who cuts off those branches which have never been truly united to the Vine, and so have no life nor power to bear fruit. But the branches which are united to the Lord Jesus Christ and are bringing forth fruit must be constantly pruned and purified that they may bring forth more fruit to the glory of God.

The Christian must abide in Christ. As the branch must be in perfect connection with the vine to have any life, so the Christian must be perfectly united to Christ. The branch severed from the vine withers and dies, invariably. But he that abides in the Lord Jesus, the soul in living union with its Saviour, will bring forth much fruit to the glory of God.

If we abide in Christ and his words and thoughts abide in us, we may ask what we will and it shall be done for us, because our desires will be those which he has given us, and their fulfilment will be to his glory.

The purified life brings forth fruit. The vine's branches must be pruned and trained with a sharp knife, the Christian's life must be cleansed and trained by trials and temptations, thus does the wise Husbandman bring the fruit to perfection. The love of Jehovah for Christ is immeasurably eternal, and surpassing the bounds of thought. Our Saviour declares that with this same love he cares for every one of his followers. The love of Christ to Jehovah is shown by perfect obedience. So would our Lord have us show our love to him by keeping his commands, and by seeking always in all things to know his will and do it.

The hours of trial, of temptation, of sacrifice and of suffering were close at hand, yet our Lord spoke of joy. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.' Not any joy that could spring from an earthly source, their circumstances were to be of the most painful and depressing for the next three days, but 'the joy of the Lord' was to sustain them, the joy of being loved by the Father, and the gladness of the promise of the Comforter.

The Bible Class

'The Husbandman.'—Isa. v., 1-7; Psa. lxxx., 7-16; Hos. x., 1; II. Tim. ii., 6; Jas. v., 7, 8.

'Abiding.'—Luke xix., 5; xxiv., 29; John xii., 24, 44-46; I. Cor. vii., 24; II. Tim. ii., 13; II. Pet. i., 23; I. John ii., 6, 10, 17, 24, 28; iii., 6, 14, 15, 24; II. John, 9; Psa. xci., 1-4; cxxv., 1, 2.

'Fruit.'—Psa. i., 1-3; Prov. xi., 30; Luke iii., 8, 9; vi., 43, 44; xlii., 6-9; John iv., 35, 36; Jas. iii., 17, 18.

Lesson Hymn.

Oh, happy band of pilgrims!
If onward ye will tread,
With Jesus as your Fellow,
To Jesus as your Head.

Oh, happy if ye labor
As Jesus did for men;
Oh, happy if ye suffer
As Jesus suffered then!

The cross that Jesus carried,
He carried as your due;
The crown that Jesus weareth,
He weareth it for you!

The trials which beset you,
The sorrows ye endure,
The manifold temptations,
Which death alone can cure—

What are they but His jewels
Of right celestial worth?
What are they but the ladders
Set up to Heaven from earth?

Oh, happy band of pilgrims,
Press onward to the skies,
When such a light affliction
Shall win so great a prize!
—Old Hymn.

Suggestions.

Jehovah is the Husbandman of the vineyard, he is the planter and owner, though he has let it out to hiring husbandmen or farmers (Matt. xxi., 33-41). The vineyard is a type of God's people, or the church. The wood of the grape vine, when cut off, is of no use at all except to burn. It is too crooked and soft to be used in any way. The only use of the vine is fruit-bearing.

The branch which in any way loses its vital connection with the vine must wither and die. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These are mostly things to be, not things to do. The branch does not work to bring forth fruit, the only condition of fruit bearing is perfect union with the life of the vine. So we must be joined to our Lord Jesus Christ and his life flowing through us will bring forth the fruits of love and obedience to God.

'He purgeth it.' If the branches were allowed to grow wild their fruit would be worth very little. So the pruning knife must be used, the branch may not look so well or feel so well after the knife has been used, but it is worth far more, and ready to bear better fruit. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' Man could not become holy if he were never tempted or tried or afflicted, it is only by fighting the battle well that a man is proved a good soldier. The trials are allowed by God, so that we may learn to trust him. The purging and cleansing are necessary to make us fit temples for the Holy Ghost. The heart in which God dwells must be as clean as heaven itself, for heaven is where God is. The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

We must abide in Christ, no matter what our circumstances are. 'Some of us think and say a good deal about "a sense of his presence;" sometimes rejoicing in it, sometimes going mourning all the day long because we have it not; praying for it, and not always seeming to receive what we ask; measuring our own position, and sometimes even that of others by it; now on the heights, now in the depths about it. And all this April-like gleam and gloom instead of steady summer glow, because we are turning our attention upon the sense of his presence, instead of the changeless reality of it!'—Frances Ridley Havergal.

Practical Points.

Jesus is the source of the Spiritual life, as the branches receive the sap from the trunk. God, the wise husbandman, takes care of both vine and branches (verse 1).

The husbandman lops off a branch here and there. So God takes away earthly comforts and friends that we may rest more firmly on him (verse 2).

The Word of God is powerful to cleanse the human heart (verse 3).

Union with the Vine is the secret of life in the branches (verses 4-7).

Fruit bearing is the aim of every one whose life is linked with the Messiah (verse 8).

Our love to God always grows out of his love to us, and obedience is the outcome of love (verses 9, 10; also I. John iv., 19).

There is no joy equal to that which comes

from seeing and hearing our Lord (verse 11; also John xx., 20).

C. E. Topic.

May 7.—Patient continuance in well-doing.—Rom. ii., 1-11.

Junior C. E.

May 7.—What are some little talents we should use for Christ?—Matt. xxv., 14-30.

**The Catechism on Beer.**

(By Julia Colman, National Temperance Publication House.)

LESSON XII.—THE PLEASURES OF BEER-DRINKING.

'Tranquil pleasures are the most durable.' Is beer pleasant to the taste? To the beginner it is usually nauseous and bitter.

Why do people continue to drink it if they dislike it?

They are led on by the example of old toppers, by the custom of treating, and by the idea that it is not polite to refuse it when offered.

On what occasions are these temptations most common?

On all social occasions, but especially when young people are out together.

Dr. J. M. Walden says: 'The (beer) hall and the garden attract thousands who would shrink from the saloon. Multitudes of young men who never before crossed the threshold of a drinking-place, have contracted tastes and formed habits that are always perilous and too often fatal.'

What can be done to avoid this social beer-drinking?

Always kindly but firmly refuse the beer when offered. Let all your friends and acquaintances know that you never take it.

It is no more necessary to ask the friend you meet to take a drink, than it is to take a hat or a handkerchief. For home and social entertainment nuts and fruit of some kind are more attractive than drinks. Entertainment with music, conversation, pictures, and curios, is better than with eating or drinking.

What can a young man say when asked to drink for friendship's sake?

Ask to be excused, shake hands, and say those are the best friends that never drink, for drink often makes quarrels.

Ought he to fall in with their habits if he has no other company?

He would better remain alone till he finds those who respect his firmness and his abstinence.

George Stephenson when only fifteen, a poor fireman in a colliery, used to remain in the pit alone and study his engine, while his fellow-workmen went off on their fortnightly spree and dog-fight. Those lonely studies prepared and led the way to his great railroad inventions, and he at last became the guest of kings and princes.

Where else are boys and girls liable to be tempted?

At those groceries where bottled ale and other liquors are kept.

What other danger is there in dealing with grocers who keep such liquors?

Liquors may be sent to the house charged under the name of other family supplies.

How does beer-drinking affect the disposition?

It makes the drinker morose and sour.

The half tipsy toper of any drink does not half know what he is about. Anyone who wants keen enjoyment should have all his senses at the brightest and keenest, so as to take in all the fun that is going.

What striking proof have we of the misery in beer?

About two-thirds of the suicides in this country are those of beer drunkards.

What, then, must we think of the pleasures of beer-drinking?

That as it brings ill-health, quarrels, moroseness, and suicide, its pleasures do not equal its sorrows.