

INDUCTIVE NOTES.

I. Study of General Features.

SEC. 1. About twenty-seven years after the events of our last lesson the members of a newly-organized Christian Church in the rich and wicked city of Corinth write to the apostle Paul, their founder, at Ephesus, for instruction about various matters of conduct, and among others, as to what course a Christian should take with reference to the common heathen custom of eating the meat of animals offered to the heathen gods in sacrifice. The question was an important one, inasmuch as such eating was regarded by the heathen as an act of worship, a kind of communion with the divinity to which the animal had been sacrificed (1 Cor. 10, 18-20). Paul's reply is assigned as our lesson. The general principle of that reply is laid down in vers. 1-3, where he teaches that such a question should not be looked at as a matter of mere abstract knowledge, but in the light of one's love to his brethren.

SEC. 2. By analysis we gain the following brief statement of the thoughts of the lesson:

As to communion with an idol by eating of its sacrifices the enlightened Christian knows it to be impossible, for the reason that the image represents no real spiritual being, and that though there are many so-called gods and lords, yet there is but one true God and Lord with whom spiritual communion can be held. Not all Christians, however, are thus enlightened; their old habits of thought are so strong that to them eating such meat is communing with an idol and committing sin. Now while we know that they are mistaken, and that God can have nothing to do with our relation to God, yet by acting on our knowledge, and eating such food, we may lead one for whom our Lord died to sin and lose his soul; and thus knowledge may lead us to sin against Christ. The simple question, then, with me, is, not whether such meat can make me an idol-worshiper, but whether my eating it will lead some one else into sin; for, if I find it does, I will give up the use of such meat altogether.

The two leading thoughts here are: I. Knowledge Gives Liberty; II. Love Controls the Use of Liberty.

II. Study of Details.

I. Knowledge Gives Liberty (vers. 4-9).

4. **Things sacrificed.** A portion of the slain animal was burned upon the altar, another portion was given to the officiating priest, and the remainder was cooked and eaten in the precincts of the temple with invited friends or sold in the public market. To a heathen the eating of such food had a religious significance. **No idol is any thing.** The word "idol" seems to be always applied in Greek to the material image and never to the spiritual being represented by the image. Correctly interpreted the words mean that no figure set up anywhere in the world represents any being possessed of deity. What the figures are meant to stand for are not divinities, but demons (10, 20). Of course to one has ever pretended to set up an image of the one true God.

5. **That are called gods.** They are spoken of and worshipped as though they had sovereign and independent power. He does deny not that there are spiritual existences; but he does deny their deity. **There are gods many, and lords many.** There are invisible, wicked spirits who have certain power and authority (Eph. 6, 12; "rulers of this darkness;" Satan is the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4, 4; "the prince of this world" (John 12, 31). It ought to be clear to every temperance worker that he is not wrestling against flesh and blood in the warfare he has undertaken, but against invisible and organized enemies of humanity. He ought, therefore, to neglect no spiritual weapon.

6. **Yet to us.** To well-instructed Christians. Eating meat offered to Aphrodite could not mean to us the worship of one in whose boasted power as a goddess we do not believe. If we do not believe in her deity no act of

ours could be a real act of worship. **One God, Not several.** The Father. He created us, redeemed us, preserves us. No other being takes place with Him. **Whom are all things.** He is the living source of all that exists. The power of a demon is not to be thought of in comparison with him. **We unto him.** Eating meat offered to an idol could mean nothing to us; we live for God our Father; we have no other purpose except to serve him. **One Lord.** The heathen accept certain spirits as their masters and lay sacrifices to them. We have but one Master and Lord. **Through whom are all things.** No heathen divinity had any thing to do with the creation of the world, but through Jesus Christ all things were made John 1, 3; Col. 1, 15-17. **We through him.** We are redeemed through his blood (1 Pet. 1, 19). We are a new creation through Christ (Gal. 6, 15). We have the best of reasons for ignoring the false divinities whom the heathen adore.

II. Love Controls the Use of Liberty (vers. 7, 13). **7. In all men.** In all Christians. **To our knowledge.** The knowledge of verse 4, that eating the meat of an idol is not offering worship. **Used until now.** The force of traditional habits of thought asserts itself. They cannot rid themselves of the feeling that the idol represents a real divinity. **Conscience being weak.** Their feelings have more influence over them than their knowledge of Christian truth. **Is defiled.** They feel themselves guilty of disloyalty to the true God.

8. **Meat will not commend.** We can neither gain nor lose in the sight of God by such a matter as eating (Rom. 14, 17). As far as the favor of God is concerned it is all the same whether we eat or do not eat. But it is not the same to the weak brother.

9. **By any means.** By any avoidable means. **Liberty.** Power to act without thinking you have worshipped a false god. **Stumbling-block.** Hindrance to his Christian life.

10. **For.** To illustrate one way in which such liberty might become a stumbling-block to another. **Be emboldened.** Be strengthened by your example, without having the good reasons you have. The Greek word *buildeth up* is used ironically. **To eat things sacrificed.** And perform what to him is an act of disloyalty to Christ.

11. **For.** I said *buildeth up*. There was good reason for such irony; the man is made to perish. **Through thy knowledge.** A thing you are proud of, but for whose use you are responsible. **The brother.** One who is entitled to a brother's consideration from you. **Perisheth.** Ceases to trust Christ and loses his soul. **For whose sake.** For whose redemption. **Christ died.** Christ was willing to lay aside not merely a certain kind of food, but life itself, for his sake (Rom. 14, 15-4). **12. sinning against the brethren.** Denying them that loving consideration to which they are entitled. **And.** To speak more explicitly. **Wounding.** Lead them into conscious condemnation. **Sin against Christ.** Transgress his righteous will.

13. **Wherefore.** In view of the consequences named in vers. 10, 11. **Meat.** Such thing as food. **Must not.** Hinder or frustrate his spiritual life. **No flesh.** Of the kind that would produce such a result. **Forever.** I will adopt this as a life-long principle of conduct. **What I may not.** I will do what I want to avoid leading him astray.

III. Application.

1. Some do not feel the need of total abstinence for themselves. They have confidence in their knowledge of the nature of intoxicating drink, and their strength to resist temptation to its abuse.

2. Is there any power in a Christian's example? v. 10. If it is known that a Christian bishop, preacher, class-leader, superintendent, teacher drinks wine will it be harder or easier for their younger and weaker acquaintances to keep from it? Is there any soul without influence?

3. If a Corinthian Christian could cause another to perish by his policy in the eating of food, cannot a modern Christian cause another to lose his soul by his policy in the matter of drink?

4. If Christ died for our brethren's sake, is it much if we deny ourselves one kind of drink for them?

5. No harm can come to others through our abstinence; harm may come to others through our indulgence; can there be two opinions, then, as to a Christian's duty?

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