



LESSON VIII, August 22.

The Excellence of Christian Love.

I. Corinthians, xiii., 1-13.

Read Chapters xii., and xiii. Commit verses 4-7.

GOLDEN TEXT.

'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.'—I. Cor., xiii., 13.

Home Readings.

- M. I. Cor. xii., 1-31. 'Covet earnestly the best gifts.'
- T. I. Cor., xiii., 1-13. 'The excellence of Christian love.'
- W. Lev. xix., 1-18. 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'
- Th. Luke x., 25-37. 'An example of neighborly love.'
- F. Rom. xiii., 1-14. 'Love the fulfilling of the law.'
- S. John xv., 1-17. 'Love one another as I have loved you.'
- S. I. John ii., 1-17. 'He that loves abides in light.'

Lesson Story.

Our lesson to-day is about, 'The greatest thing in the world'—the virtue without which all other virtues are of little worth. Everyone loves something or somebody even if it is only themselves, but love of self has no part in this chapter.

Paul has, perhaps, in mind those who have boasted of the wonderful gifts bestowed on them, and reminds them that even the gifts of tongues and prophecy and faith, if used without charity, gentleness and love, are unprofitable. Even the utmost generosity and greatest self-sacrifice, if not prompted by the spirit of love, are worthless. Love is patient and courteous, contented and humble. There is no self-seeking or love of display in true charity. Love fills the heart with sweetness and purity, takes no pleasure in evildoers, but rejoices in righteousness. Love is long-suffering, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things, love never faileth. Prophecies shall fail, tongues shall cease, but love lasts and shall last for ever.

We know a little, and we can prophesy a little now, but our knowledge is very slight and imperfect, we cannot grasp much with these human minds, so limited and narrow. But when we enter into the perfect knowledge of God, the little views that we had on earth will vanish in the depths of the riches of the knowledge of God. As a man's thought and understanding is immeasurably greater and larger than that of a child, so the heavenly mind will be infinitely greater and larger than the human. As the reflection of a face in polished metal is dim and uncertain compared to beholding the face in reality, so our knowledge is dim and uncertain, compared to the knowledge we shall possess. Now we know imperfectly, then shall we know even as we are known.

'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.'

Lesson Hymn.

Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost,
Taught by Thee, we covet most,
Of thy gifts at Pentecost
Holy, heavenly love.

Love is kind and suffers long,
Love is meek, and thinks no wrong,
Love, than death itself more strong;
Therefore, give us love.

Prophecy will fade away,
Melting in the light of day;
Love will ever with us stay;
Therefore, give us love.

Faith will vanish into sight;
Hope be emptied in delight;
Love in heaven will shine more bright;
Therefore, give us love.

Faith and hope and love we see,
Joining hand in hand agree;
But the greatest of the three;
And the best, is love.

Lesson Hints.

'Tongues.'—The Pentecostal gift of eloquence. 'Charity'—Christian love. 'Sounding brass'—a discordant noise, having no music or worth. Having no more meaning or effect than a 'tinkling cymbal.'

'Prophecy'—Speaking God's will to the people. 'Mysteries'—The things that are hidden from the wise and prudent, (Matt., xi., 25.) 'Faith'—Miracle-working faith. 'Remove mountains'—as promised by our Lord, (Matt., xvii., 20.)

'Have not charity'—If I am prompted by some other spirit than love to God and man, 'I am nothing.' 'Bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned'—If these are done for men's applause or to glorify myself in any way they are of no profit to the doer, a great self-sacrifice if not performed in love and humility will make the doer proud and boastful, thus harming, instead of benefiting his own soul. 'Charity suffereth long'—is not impatient or hasty-tempered. Love is like the rose, which when crushed gives out a sweet fragrance.

'Is kind'—Kindliness and courtesy are natural to him who loves. 'Seeketh not her own'—is willing that others should have the best places, content to be anywhere in God's world and work. 'Is not easily provoked'—'Is not provoked,' (R.V.), never flies into a temper, never utters a mean word. 'Thinketh no evil'—Guileless (Psa. xxxii., 2), never imputing wrong motives. 'Rejoiceth in the truth'—In sympathy with every good word and work.

'Believeth all things'—believing good of every one, not critical or fault-finding. Believing that God will make 'all things work together for good to them that love God. 'Charity never faileth'—endures forever. The love we have here is but a foretaste of the love we shall have in heaven.

'Prophecies'—There will be no need of prophecies when all shall know the Lord from the least even unto the greatest. (Jer. xxxi., 34.) 'Tongues'—There will be only one language in heaven, all shall know the same, the language of love. 'We know in part'—imperfectly.

'Through a glass'—The mirrors of those days were polished pieces of metal, nothing could be seen clearly in them. 'Now abideth faith, hope, charity,'—these are the certainties of religion, these three endure forever, and the greatest of all virtues is love. (John xv., 12, 13.)

Search Questions.

Give ten verses, apart from this chapter, showing what Christian love does.

Primary Lesson.

Did you know there was a verse in the bible that tells us to be kind? You will find it in the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the thirty-second verse, 'Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.'

It does not mean just being kind and sweet to our own father and mother and the brothers and sisters in our own home, but to every one. You know any one who loves Jesus is a child of God, and so we are all brothers and sisters. God is love, and if we want to be like God, we must be loving and kind and thoughtful for others.

Do you know what makes your cross and angry and makes your face all pucker up into such an ugly little frown as it sometimes does? It is the naughty thoughts in your heart, if your heart did not hold mean thoughts your lips would never speak those mean, cross words, that make other people feel so badly.

How can we keep our hearts from having unloving thoughts? We can not. What shall we do then?

If a tumbler is brimming full of water, can it hold any air? If it is just brimming over with water there can be no room for anything that is not water. If our hearts are just brimming over with love, there can be no room for anything that is not love.

But how can our hearts be filled with love?

God is love, and if we ask him to fill our hearts with himself, we will be so full of love that there will be no room for anything else. How can we keep this love in our hearts? We can not because we have no power in ourselves to be good. But Jesus has all power. He can make us loving and forgiving, tenderhearted, kind and true, and he will keep us so if we just keep trusting him to do it all the time.

Just wherever we are, in school, on the play-ground, at home, or walking along the street, we can speak to Jesus and ask him to

keep our hearts full of love, love to God first and to the people around us and the people far away.

SUGGESTED HYMNS.

'My Jesus, I love Thee,' 'Hark! my Soul,' 'Behold, what love!' 'Jesus is our Shepherd,' 'More Love to Thee,' 'Love Divine,' 'God Loved the World,' 'Jesus, the Very Thought,' 'Oh, for a Heart to Praise my God!'

Practical Points.

By A. H. CAMERON.

(I. Cor., xiii., 1-13.)

Loveless eloquence, cold intelligence, barren faith and common charity, all shrink into insignificance when compared with Christian love. Verses 1, 2, 3.

All the characteristics of love which are mentioned here emphasize the beauty, value and power of the 'greatest thing in the world.' Verses 4 to 8.

Prophecies, tongues and knowledge, sooner or later will reach the vanishing point, but 'kept by a father's hand, love cannot die,' Verses 8 to 10.

The Christian shall be childlike but not childish. Verse 11.

Viewed from all standpoints this world loses by comparison with the next, yet it is our duty to make the best of both worlds. Verse 12, also I. Tim. iv., 8.

Love is first among the Christian graces, because it is the source of faith and the mainspring of hope. Verse 13.

Tiverton, Ont.

Christian Endeavor Topic.

Aug. 22.—'Have we the Spirit of Christ?'—Rom viii., 1-18.

Junior Prayer-Meeting Topic.

Aug. 22.—Lessons from great Christians. Rev. vii., 9-17.

Closet Work.

1. Never sit down to study a lesson without seeking aid of the Holy Spirit.

Psa. cxix., 18; James i., 5.

2. Seek to know your deficiencies as a teacher, and make these a special subject of prayer.

3. Make special prayer daily for each member of your class; fervent, wrestling, believing prayer.

James v., 16.

4. Pray for your superintendent that he may have the needed wisdom and grace.—'Sunday-School Times.'

But the teacher's preparation should enter into his whole life. He should be prepared to live during the week what he teaches his class on the Sabbath. There should be no inconsistencies in his life. Worldlings are quick to notice the faults of professed Christians, and it has been said that inconsistent Christians do more harm to the cause of Christ than infidels. What must be the effect on the scholars if the teacher's life be not consistent with his teachings!—'Living Epistle.'

Here is the experience of a noted worker in the Sabbath-school, which offers a good hint for getting more and better study of the Sabbath-school lesson at home: 'Mrs. Mary Geikie Adams, a sister of Cunningham Geikie, is superintendent of the Home Department of the Sunday-school in Canaan, Conn. She says that, when she first calls, if she cannot get a person to make the pledge to study the lesson a half-hour every week, she does not urge the matter, but leaves the question for consideration. The next time almost invariably the pledge is signed.'—'Sunday-School Times.'

Did You Forget?

How often do you really deny yourself to contribute a few pennies to God's service?

'Forgot my nickel,' mumbled the boy with the gold watch.

'Spent all my money yesterday,' laughed the one with the spike-toed shoes.

'Saving up to buy a "bike,"' said the one with his hands in his pockets.

The envelope passed round the class, returning to the teacher with six cents. Everybody knew who put in that nickel and penny. It was the boy who earned fifty cents a week, carrying a newspaper route. His trousers were too short for his fast lengthened legs, and his carefully polished shoes showed a break here and there; but one-tenth of his earnings was given without fail to the Lord.—'Wellspring.'