

## The Sunday School.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

3RD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER, MAY 14, 1884.

## BIBLE LESSON.

## CHRISTIAN LOVE :—1 Cor. 13: 1-13.

This beautiful passage describes the great and supreme essential in Christian life and character. Now suppose the clock at home keeps wrong time—stops altogether; father alters hands—winds it up again—sets it going—no use: then sends for watchmaker—he looks inside—sees main-spring out of order—repairs that—then clock goes all right. Paul, like that watchmaker, saw things which grieved him in Church at Corinth; they had many gifts—knew a great deal—but *something very important wanting*—what? (See 1 Cor. xvi. 14). Charity, *i.e.*, love. This is the main-spring—chief thing. (See Col. iii. 14; 1 Pet. iv. 8). The best gift (1 Cor. xii. 31). So St. Paul now tells them what is this more excellent way, in this "Song of Love." The pre-eminence of love is set forth in three ways. The apostle describes its superiority, its loveliness, and its permanence.

## I. SUPERIORITY OF LOVE : verses 1-7.

There was much wrangling and rivalry among the Corinthians as to the gifts which they possessed. St. Paul did not find fault with them because they desired these gifts, but he bids them remember they are valuable only as they are used with a right motive and a worthy object, that they are all subordinate to something else—love. Upon the possession of the grace of love, the value of all their gifts depended. Apart from it they were worthless.

*Without love tongues are nothing.* The object of this gift was not, as used to be thought, to enable its possessors to preach the Gospel in various languages, but it was a miraculous sign of the presence of the Spirit, and its object was to praise God and also to arrest attention and like other miracles attest the supernatural character of Christianity. It was an imposing gift, but inferior to others less showy. Without love it was but an empty and meaningless utterance, like sounding brass or clanging cymbal. How many showy accomplishments in which people take great pride are really of no value, because they want that spirit which alone can make their possession useful or happy.

*Without love prophecy is useless.* By prophecy is not meant foretelling, predicting, but forthtelling, speaking for God, instructing others. It was a high gift. It was employed in the noblest occupation. The teaching of Divine Truth is the grandest work possible to man. But it becomes mere intellectual task work without love. Love alone can interpret love. Love alone can apply truth to the heart.

*Without love faith is nothing.* Love is the soul of faith. Faith that is merely the intellectual belief of a doctrine is worthless. Faith in a person implies a feeling towards that person correspondent to his claims and worth. Trust in Jesus implies love for Him. Apart from love it is a mere intellectual acceptance. Real faith worketh by love. Or it may be faith as a mere will-power and energy of doing. But in either case, whether it be that which has to do with conviction of intellect or force of will, whether it be knowledge or power, without love it is worthless. Satan is both knowing and strong, but the very incarnation of hatred.

*Without faith the costliest gifts and greatest sacrifices are nothing.* A man may do and give much from very unworthy motives. It is not what we do, but how and why; not what we give but the spirit of the gift which God regards. Men may even assume an ostentation of self-sacrifice, and counterfeit the martyr spirit. A fanatic is in love with himself and a fanatic's death is but self-glorification. It is very useful to be clever—God makes some people clever—they can do things which others cannot, but a very poor man, unlearned, even a little child may have love, and that the best thing, because it belongs to the heart, not the head.

## II. THE LOVELINESS OF LOVE : verses 4-7.

What a beautiful portrait is here drawn. Love comprehends all moral good; it is the single essential element of right character; it is the source of all grace and virtues. God is love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. The whole duty of man is summed up in love. Love to God and love to man are the same in nature and differ only in the application and degree.

*Love is the root of all graces.* It suffers long, bears injuries and provocations, is not hasty to revenge. It is kind, courteous, thoughtful, considerate, even in

small matters. It *envieth not*, delights in the happiness of others, rejoices in their success, is far removed from all the meanness and vexation of jealousy. It *vaunteth not itself*, does not act insolently or ostentatiously. It is not *puffed up* with conceit, but is humble and modest. It *doeth not behave itself unseemly*, but is marked by delicacy of feeling, tact and propriety of conduct, graciousness and courtesy. It *seeketh not its own*, its own way, its own rights, but is self-sacrificing and devoted to others. It is *not easily provoked*, fretful, resentful, ill-tempered. It *taketh no account of evil*, does not plan it or impute it, but is forgiving and ready to make allowances. It *rejoiceth not with unrighteousness*, does not sympathize with evil, but *rejoiceth with the truth*, in its spread and triumph, in the good of men, not in their injury. It *beareth*, literally, its proof against *all things*, against all provocations, affronts, slanders. It *believeth all things*, is not suspicious, but trustful. It *hopeth all things*, turns to the bright side, never desponds of any one. It *endureth all things*, is not fickle and unsteady, but is persevering, patient, constant, pursuing with wisdom and determination, its blessed aims—the comfort and help of others.

## III. THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE : verses 8-13.

Love is eternal. We can never outgrow it and it will never forsake us. Every thing else shall fail. All present gifts are for present needs and shall close with the necessity. We shall outgrow them. We are now children at school. What we have now and know now is partial and temporary. It must all give place to the perfect. When we see the whole we shall find the solution and much that now perplexes us. Now we see things obscurely, like objects reflected in a dim metallic mirror. Then we shall see clearly as those who are face to face. Faith, hope and love abide and will ever abide. They are imperishable and immortal. The contrast in ver. 13 is not between love as imperishable, and faith and hope as perishable. Faith will still be the life of the soul; its attitude towards Christ and the Father will ever be that of trust. Hope will still lead us onward to higher attainments and greater unfolding of truth and joy. But greatest of all is love, the root and inspiration of both faith and hope, which it will ever overshadow and sustain.

## CATECHISM LESSON.

## THE CREED—"I believe in the Holy Ghost."

We now confess our belief in the third person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, Matt. xxviii. 19.

## I. WHO THE HOLY SPIRIT IS.

1. *He is a Person*, not a mere influence or power, but a real Person, who lives and loves and acts. He makes intercession, Rom. viii. 26;—testifies, John xv. 26;—teaches, John xiv. 26;—gives spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 8, 11.

1. *He is a Divine Person*.—He is called God, Matt. xii. 28, compared with Luke xi. 20. 1 Cor. vi. 19, compared with 1 Cor. iii. 16. Acts v. 3, 4.

The acts of God are wrought by Him, and He possesses the attributes of God, Ps. cxxxix. 7-13; Rom. xv. 19; 1 Cor. ii. 10; Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. iv. 14.

## II. WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES.

He *convinceth* the world of sin, etc., John xvi. 8;—strives with sinners, Gen. vi. 3.

He *glorifies* Christ, John xvi. 14;—testifies of Him, John xv. 26;—is sent by Him, John xv. 26; xvi. 7.

He *dwells with* Christians, John xiv. 17;—teaches and guides them, John xiv. 26; xvi. 13;—comforts, helps, and sanctifies them Acts ix. 31; Rom. viii. 26; xv. 16; 1 Cor. vi. 11.

He is the *unction*, the *seal*, and the *earnest*, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. What is the unction? 1 John ii. 20. There was the anointing in the Levitical dispensation, Exod. xxx. 23-33; typical of the anointing of the Holy Ghost in the Gospel, Luke iv. 18; Acts x. 38; and this unction of the Spirit is our enlightenment, 1 Cor. ii. 12; 1 John ii. 27. What is the seal? The ordinary use of a seal will explain this. It implies certainty, security. It authenticates, it confirms, Dan. vi. 17; Matt. xxvii. 66; see 2 Tim. ii. 19. Thus the Holy Spirit assures and confirms the truth to His believing people, Eph. i. 13. What the earnest? The word means foretaste, or pledge; and this the Spirit is to us of heaven, 2 Cor. v. 5. He produces in the believer love, joy, and every blessed fruit, Gal. v. 22; these, like the grapes of Eshcol, are an earnest of the inheritance, promised to the people of God.

The Spirit pleads and strives. Oh, beware lest you resist Him, Acts vii. 51; Gen. vi. 3; Isai. lxiii. 10. He is not an enemy. He is resisted when in spite of pleading and striving He is refused admittance. Seek Him. He is given in answer to prayer, Luke xi. 13. Then when He dwelleth in you, 1 Cor. iii. 16; John xiv. 17; Isai. lvii. 15; grieve Him not by inconsistency and unholiness, Eph. iv. 30, lest He be altogether quenched, 1 Thess. v. 19.

## Missionary.

## SAMOA.

A hundred years ago the people of the Samoan Islands were such savages that a French traveller who spent twenty-four hours with them dismissed them with a paragraph to the effect that their customs were so atrocious that he would not describe them. The population of the group is 35,000, against less than 34,000 forty years ago. Heathenism is a thing of the past; but civilization, it will be observed, has not effected the decline in population which it is declared to cause in other South Sea Islands. Of the 37,000 inhabitants, 27,000 are under the care of the London society; the rest are ministered to by the Wesleyans and Roman Catholics. Some 5,000 are members of the Congregational churches, and 8,000 or 9,000 are in the schools of that denomination. The London society has also a staff of seven European missionaries, who are aided by upward of 200 village pastors. These native pastors have been at least four years in the Malua Institution, are ordained, and supported by the people of the villages where they labor. The Malua Institution was commenced in 1844, and now occupies, with its fifty houses and plantation grounds, a block of 300 acres of land belonging to the society. The aim at self-support has been a great success, simply by keeping up the fishing and agricultural habits of the students for an hour or two daily. Some 1,750 students have been on the roll of the Institution since its commencement, of whom 600 have been young women, the wives of the students. Native agents from this Institution have been employed in introducing Christianity to Savage Island, Tokelau, the Ellice and Gilbert Islands, the New Hebrides, the Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia, and arrangements are in progress to send some of them to share in pioneer work in New Guinea. A considerable commerce has sprung up, the imports of British goods amounting to \$250,000 to \$500,000 yearly.

## MADAGASCAR.

Queen Ramavalona III. was crowned November 22. Malagasy and English papers give quite full accounts of the interesting occasion, which brought together the greatest assembly of Hovas ever seen, estimated at two hundred and fifty thousand, and even higher. Instead of soldiers, boys and girls from the city schools of Antareanarivo were appointed to meet her Majesty, and a place of honor was assigned to the schools of both city and country in attendance. In this, as on a former occasion, the Bible was honored. On the canopy under which she sat were inscribed in letters of gold, "Glory to God in the highest," "Peace on earth," "Good will toward men," "God be with us;" and in her speech were the quotations, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." A special reception was given to the teachers of the schools, and a special charge of fidelity. Thus far the Queen seems disposed to carry out the Christian rule of her predecessor which did such honor both to her head and heart. May God grant her continuance! This would seem to be a good time to get before us the present status of Christian work in Madagascar, the past record of which is so phenomenal, and signalized both by the martyr-spirit and Bible triumphs in the absence of the missionary. We have before us the exhaustive report of Mr. Abraham Kingdom, whose relations to that work enable him to speak advisedly. In the front appears the joint work of the London and the Friends' Missionary Societies. It is noticeable that they work together. Then follows the Norwegian Society and the Society for

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