

spiritual sense, all that can be desired to satisfy the soul's aspirations. The Church, as an ideal, is the bride, and the individual believers are the true and the individual guests. In Revelation is a most delightful picture of the bride, the Church of God, like gold, as it were, transparent glass, shining with the light of God, pure as crystal, with twelve manner of fruits, and useful for the healing of the nations.

#### THE INVITATION TO THE WEDDING.

It is customary in the East not only to give an invitation some time beforehand, but to send around servants at the proper time to inform the invited guests that all things are ready. The first invitation was refused, and a second one was issued, showing the kindness and forbearance of the king. There was no threatening, but only a loving, earnest invitation, as if they might have misunderstood the first invitation, or not realized its value. The wedding feast was ready. The fullness of the time had come. The world was in a favorable condition for the coming of Christ. Only when the lamb was slain on Calvary were all things ready for the marriage. Jesus had come from heaven, had taught his divine message, and was even now uttering his last words. Within three days he would consummate his atonement on the Cross. And to-day, the wedding feast is ready, the invitations are out, and all mankind are requested to come to the heavenly banquet. The servants, who conveyed the invitations, represent all God's inspired messengers—Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles; and, to-day, God's preachers, and teachers, the Word, the Holy Spirit, God's providence, and the institutions of religion. "And let him that heareth say, Come," including all faithful believers in Jesus Christ.

#### THE INVITATION REFUSED.

The invitation was refused in two ways (1) By neglect. They took no notice of what had been done for them. All was as nothing as compared with their farms and their merchandise. They were content to enjoy what they had, and to acquire more. They were so absorbed in worldly things that they were indifferent to the message from God which Christ brought. Is not this a true picture of multitudes of people of this age, indifferent to the claims of Christ and religion, because absorbed and satisfied with business and pleasure? (2) Active opposition. When the invitation came to some, they insulted and persecuted the servants bearing the message, and went so far in some cases as to kill the messengers whose purpose was kindness and good-will.

#### RESULT OF PERSISTENT REFUSAL.

"The King was wroth," says the narrative, which is the just protest of the divine mind against persistent wrongdoing in the face of light and knowledge. It was indignation against the wrong of those who not only despised every effort to make them better, but prevented others from coming into the kingdom. "He sent forth his armies"—those persons and those forces which accomplish God's purposes of judgment against the wicked. Reference is made here to the Roman armies under Titus, which destroyed Jerusalem forty years later (A.D. 70) when multitudes of the people were slain, the ground around the city being scarcely large enough to contain the crosses on which the Jews were crucified. There has been no Jewish nation since. All this might have been avoided if the nation had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. This historic event illustrates the destruction of the wicked, and an awful lesson it is. The calamity does not take place until every influence to make them better has been exhausted.

#### CONSCIENCE PRICKS.

##### The Feast.

Purity is a feast. Pandering to the flesh merely breeds a raging hunger, but cleanliness is an abiding satisfaction.

Usefulness is a feast. Would it not be strange if God, who created all interests, were not the most interesting of them all?

Add together all the delights to which you would like to be invited, and they will fall far short of the joys included in the Saviour's invitation to himself.

##### The Refusal.

The commonest way of refusing Christ's invitation is simply to disregard it. It is refusing Christianity to accept what one likes and reject what one does not like.

Few regard their refusal of Christ as final, but only for the minute; and yet a minute is all that any man owns of time.

It is not enough to accept Christ in the heart. His invitation is public, and requires a public response.

##### The Punishment.

The punishment of refusing heat is cold; of refusing light is darkness; of refusing eternal life is eternal death.

There is always involved in the scorning of any good the choice of its opposite, and that choice is the punishment.

If you would understand how death can be eternal, ask yourself what more Christ could do for a sinner through all eternity than he has already done, and the sinner refuses on earth.

God could remove the penalty of sin in only one way—by reducing men to the level of things.

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

This parable is a very picturesque one. Make the setting of it vivid; to do so, have two papers or addresses arranged for in advance, one on "A marriage in the East," the other on "Christ's teaching from the marriage scene." Make clear in the meeting the joys, delights, and satisfaction of the Christian life—it is compared to a wedding banquet with all its surrounding enjoyments. Are any in the meeting, like the people in the parable, refusing the invitation of the King? Use the opportunity to repeat the invitation with loving solicitude, pointing out the perils of neglect. Teach those who are already sitting at the Banquet Table to appreciate their privilege.

#### NOVEMBER 2—"THE BEST GIFT."

1 Cor. 12, 28-31; 13, 1-13.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., Oct. 27. Love God ..... Mark 12, 28-34  
Tues., Oct. 28. Love Christ ..... Mat. 22, 37-39  
Wed., Oct. 29. Love your kindred ..... Ps. 133, 1-3  
Thurs., Oct. 30. Love your friends ..... Luke 10, 27-37  
Fri., Oct. 31. Love your neighbors ..... Luke 10, 27-37  
Sat., Nov. 1. Love your enemies ..... Luke 6, 31-35

The greatest thing in mind is love. Whatever a human being may be, or may have, or may do, if it is destitute of love, it lacks the great divine element. By love is not meant that sentiment which links us to our fellows. That is an instinct common to animal existence. When possessed in a high degree, it makes one "amiable" or "good-natured." It is a blessing, but not a virtue. There is no morality, necessarily, in it. Nor by love do we mean theological love for one's own faith and sect, which pours forth tender benedictions upon all within the limits of its own creed, but has scorn for all beside. We may describe love as a moral sympathy with God and for men, or as a spasmodic emotion, it is the underground of character, the foundation of true virtue. It places man's entire being in right relation to God and the universe. It was incarnate in Jesus Christ.

#### OPINION OF GREAT APOSTLES.

The three great apostolic writers of the New Testament—Paul, John, Peter—all agree that the highest of Christian graces is love. Peter, the man of courage, Paul, the man of faith, and John, the beloved disciple, reach the one conclusion—love is the greatest of moral qualities. Paul, in this chapter (1 Cor. 13), appears to see behind the veil, and in words that can never die, he reveals to us this perfect ideal of love, which every Christian should make his own.

#### LOVE, WHY THE GREATEST?

It is a natural question to ask, Why is love the greatest of the Christian virtues? There are at least two reasons:

(1) Love is most like God himself. In creation, God is love. In grace, God is love. In glory, God is love. He can receive nothing that can add to his greatness. All that he does is a pouring forth of love, an expression of beneficence. God is just, is true, patient, unchanging, all-powerful. These are all parts of his love. Without these he would not be perfect love.

2. Love is eternal. Gifts, however useful or attractive, fail. They are concerned with temporal things, and are in their nature temporal. The knowledge of art, of science, of law, must one day become obsolete; although the lessons learned, and the habits acquired in gaining such knowledge will be endless. The knowledge itself must cease when the subject-matter ceases. But love is an emanation from God himself, reflecting itself in his creatures, and shining through them upon each other—the very light of heaven. It shall never cease. In such an element we shall one day live and move and have our being. Possessing divine love, we possess divine life, and that is eternal.

#### LOVE, HOW ATTAINED.

1. Seek for it. This fire can only be kindled from heaven. To God we must turn to learn what love is. Only in his light can we see light; only because he first loved us can we learn to love him and our fellows in him. Christ as God manifest in the flesh, was a perfect illustration of love amid human surroundings. Learn of him, partake of his life, and you will have love personified.

2. Do the things which love demands. There is little of the divine love in loving those to whom we feel drawn. Is there some one who has injured you; some one who has made himself disagreeable to you; some one who is a successful rival? Have you unkind feelings toward such a person? Would you be secretly pleased to hear that some harm had come to them? Remember that towards such you have an opportunity of cultivating love. Seek opportunities of doing kindnesses to such persons. Speak as kindly as you can about them, when their acts or characters are discussed. Pray for them; you cannot long dislike a person who is daily in your prayers. Persevere in such a course. Think, when urged to be uncharitable, how the Master would have thought and acted in your place. If you learn no more, you will at last learn this, "Love never faileth."

#### BRIGHT PLAINES.

Love is the one philosopher. The gate of heaven is love: there is no other.

The soul is not so much where it lives as where it loves.

Hold fast to God with one hand, and open wide the other to your neighbor. That is religion.

Of two things, that is best which has the strongest influence on character. Of all things, the best is a good character itself.

Gold is often found by chance, but a good character must be coveted and sought with a plan.