

## Devotional Service.

By REV. T. J. PARR, M.A.

### NOVEMBER 19.—"LIBERTY AND LOVE"

Rom. 15: 1-5.

#### A TEMPERANCE MEETING.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., Nov. 13. His servants whom ye obey. Rom. 6: 15-23.  
Tues., Nov. 14. Walking at liberty. Ps. 119: 41-48.  
Wed., Nov. 15. Liberty a stumbling block. 1 Cor. 8: 1-13.  
Thurs., Nov. 16. Thy neighbor as thyself. Matt. 22: 34-40.  
Fri., Nov. 17. The profit of many. 1 Cor. 10: 25-33.  
Sat., Nov. 18. Servants through love. Gal. 5: 13-15.

In this remarkable passage of moral teaching, Paul presents a motive for temperance, in the relation the strong should bear to the weak. And by temperance here is not meant that restricted meaning of the word which confines it to total abstinence from intoxicating liquors, but rather that self-restraint which has for its object the bringing of everything into subjection to the will of Christ, and which keeps in view the weakness and tendencies towards excess on the part of others. The intoxicating cup may not always be harmful in itself, but it is always harmful when confederated in the light of its baneful effects. We can point to thousands who are made to stumble, and fall, and make shipwreck of faith on account of it. We are aware of the domestic, social, and national ruin brought about by its ravages. And knowing these things, can the Christian indulge in its use, or give his support to the traffic that supplies it, even though he has liberty to do so? If this, or any other indulgence or habit, has a morally injurious effect on others, we must stop it, even if we consider that the indulgence would do us as individuals no harm. "No man liveth unto himself." No man forms habits unto himself. No man does any outward act unto himself. We must always be ready to consider the effect of our conduct upon the welfare of others. We may have liberty to do many things, but our love for our fellows restrains us from the exercise of that liberty. This is gospel altruism. This is one of the first principles of the well-being of human society. It is the outcome of the love of God in the soul.

#### THE WEAK AND THE STRONG.

By graphic strokes, says Burrows, Paul shows the weakness of the strong as well as the weakness of the weak. Both require words of direction. Each must see the true relation in which it stands to the other.

(a) *Both have their faults.* Strength may beget self-confidence and the errors that flow from it. The strong may err on the side of indulgence; the weak on the side of restraint. The strong may have a contemptuous spirit and bearing; the weak may have a censorious disposition. Neither can say to the other, "let me pull the mote out of thine eye," until he has attended to the condition of his own optic organ.

(b) *Both have a common level.* The strong and the weak should have a consciousness of common weakness. A strong man is but men at the best. A Samson may be bound captive and led blind; a Solomon may be overthrown by a sin; a Peter may be frightened by a maid's thoughtless speech. How short the space between the strong and the weak! By general consent, Jesus Christ has been assigned the foremost place among the strong of the world. And yet, with sympathy and consideration, with tender tones of welcome, and gentle words of love, he received and helped the weak. We are ambitious to be Christ's for strength, let us

also be ambitious to be Christ's for gentleness and helpfulness to the weak. Aim not to break, but to mend the bruised reeds of maimed humanity; not to quench, but to fan into a spiritual flame the smoking fag of the expiring heaven-fires in human nature.

(c) *Each needs the other.* The strong need the weak, and the weak need the strong. A place for every man, and every man in his place. This is a law both for the Church and the world. And what a Church we should have if only that principle were observed! A place for every man! And yet how many men out of their places! The Church has room for all, a place for all, and a task for all. But selfishness says: The weakest must go to the wall. Christian teaching says: The weakest must be received and nurtured into greater strength by the strong. Let this even at the expense of cutting off indulgences that might cause the weaker to stumble. The weak as well as the strong are needful; the weak gather strength by contact with the strong, and the strong secure added qualities by helping the weak. Acting and reacting each on the other, there is gain to both.

(d) *Both are servants of Christ.* The strong are great helps in the kingdom of God. There have been in the past patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs among God's servants. Giant like men have done his bidding; eagle-eyed heroes have watched his purposes; wisdom and eloquence have been at the divine command, and the great of the earth have willingly advanced his designs. But the weak have also had a mission. She who could only show her love by tears, and she who could only tell the wealth of her devotion by giving two mites, stood high in the esteem of the Master. The woman who fed Elijah, and the boy who carried the basket with the loaves and fishes, each had a place in the Master's purposes. The weak who use their limited resources can often accomplish more than the strong who neglect their powers and opportunities.

(e) *Both require divine help.* God is able to make the weak stand. This ability has been proved from time to time in the records of the human race, and in the personal experience of Christians. Weak women have been strengthened, and have shamed mighty men by their exhibition of faithfulness and courage. And they are doing it to-day in the churches of our own land. God helps the weak who are willing to be helped. The strongest likewise become morally and spiritually strong by the strength which God supplies. There is no moral strength but what is God-imparted and man-appropriated. In ourselves we are all weak; in God's grace, by the Spirit's power, we are spiritually strong, if strong at all.

#### SIDE-LIGHTS.

1. Imitation of Christ leaves no alternative but to be helpful.

2. To be hard-hearted is to be unlike Christ, and he who is unlike Christ cannot be Christ's disciple.

3. To help one who is capable of helping himself is a waste of energy; but to help the weak is to exercise the soul in a noble calling.

4. Some of us who are strong have much to answer for—to answer for the moral fall of a brother by our thoughtless conduct, or the pang of dismay in the weak one when a chery word would have been so helpful.

5. Where Christianity exerts its influence, men will not be satisfied until their theories of religion have practical expression—they must help one another; the strong help the weak.

6. Paul could eat whatever was set before him; he could drink without the least excess. But he was ready to surrender both meat and wine for the weak brother's sake. This is the spirit of Christ exemplified in practice.

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

A most essential Christian principle is asserted in our topic this week. There are many things which we may feel at liberty to do, but which we *must not* do for the sake of our fellows. Make this lesson clear and forcible. Arrange for some one to prepare a brief paper on "Am I my brother's keeper?" Open and close your meeting promptly at the time appointed. Ask half a dozen leaguers to write sentence thoughts on the topic and read them at the meeting. Vary the exercises, have much bright music, and give opportunity for prayer and testimony.

### NOVEMBER 26.—"OUR REUTRUF FOR THE LORD'S BENEFITS"

Ps. 118: 12-19.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., Nov. 20. To God. Ps. 109: 1-5.  
Tues., Nov. 21. Our God. Ps. 145: 1-21.  
Wed., Nov. 22. The church's blessings. Ps. 145: 1-21.  
Thurs., Nov. 23. The nation's blessings. Ps. 145: 1-21.  
Fri., Nov. 24. By word. Ps. 107: 1-9.  
Sat., Nov. 25. By life. Ps. 145: 1-21.

There are many reasons for thanking at all seasons of the year. And, although our national Thanksgiving Day for the present year is now a thing of the past, yet we should remember, that every day should be a thanksgiving day. That temporal and spiritual blessings are continuously granted, calling for continuous gratitude and praise. Says one of the early saints, "Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name forever and ever."

#### WHY OFFER PRAISE?

Mortals should offer praise to God for all that is, and for what God does. And here is an ever-present source of praise. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." We are to bring our minds to think of the greatness and power and majesty and holiness of God—to contemplate all his matchless attributes, and then to "call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless and praise his holy name." We are also to reflect upon the goodness of God in his relation to men both in providence and grace. And when impressed with the thought we shall, as the Psalmist did, "Abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and sing of thy righteousness." We are to consider likewise the mercy of God as shown in the gift of His son Jesus Christ, and offers of salvation in His name. We are to experience personally that "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy." Then our souls will awaken in expressions of joyful praise. We are to offer thanksgivings, too, for the glorious fact that God has established His kingdom in the world, and that it is working its way to conquest and dominion. The Psalmist breaks forth in high sounding praise when he says: "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." So, in response to the question, "Why offer praise?" the answer comes: "Praise God for His greatness, His goodness, His mercy, and His established kingdom, that shall finally usher in the golden age of the world's history."

#### A SPIRITUAL REFLECTOR.

Praise is a spiritual reflector in operation. For the meaning of the word is irradiation from the luminous body. Here is a highly polished reflector behind a lighted lamp. The reflector is now a luminous body throwing out rays of light. The reflector is luminous, however, because it has received the light of the lamp. And the reflector gives forth not its own rays of light, but the rays that come from the flame of the lamp. Praise represents the soul of the believer luminous with the glories of the Sun of Righteousness, and reflecting those heavenly