

ABSTINENCE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

Oct. 27.
Lesson, 1 Cor. 8: 1-13. Gol. Text, Rom. 15: 1.
Memory vs. 12, 13. Catechism 53-56.

The circumstances in which the words of this lesson were written were as follows:—

Five years previous to this time, Paul had reached Corinth, a heathen city of 400,000 people, living to a great extent in dishonesty, debauchery and drunkenness. The few converts who broke away from this old life had a hard fight, both with their own old habits and inclinations, and with the daily example around them. They were all "young converts" for it had been but five years since any of them had first heard the gospel. Some of them would be stronger than others, just as it is to-day, and Paul writes this letter to them. Read the whole Epistle carefully, in the light of the circumstances, and see what new meaning is thrown upon it.

This lesson is on the one point of eating meat offered unto idols. When their beasts were slain, the flesh was often laid before an idol, as a sacrifice, then taken and sold in the shops. Christians if eating with a friend, or buying food at the market, might get such meat. Some of them thought that to eat it would be countenancing idolatry. Paul tells them that it cannot make the meat any worse to have been thus offered, and there is no sin in eating it, but if a man think it to be sinful, to him it is sinful. Further, if a strong Christian, who thinks it no harm, should eat, and a weak one be led by that example to eat also, and yet have doubts whether he is right, that weak one sins, and the strong one, is, in a measure, responsible for it, and is guilty. Therefore one should not take all the liberty that he may be entitled to, he should think how it will affect his weaker brethren and deny himself for their sakes.

Vs. 1-3. A contrast between knowledge and love. It is good for one to have knowledge that enables him to see that an idol is nothing and that the eating of such meat can be no sin.

It is better to have such love for others as will lead one to deny one-self for their sakes.

Vs. 4-12. The writer carries out, enlarges, the idea of vs. 1-3, showing that the idol is indeed nothing, but that there are some who think it a sin, this eating of meats offered to idols, and for them it is sin, and if by my eating it they follow my example, and yet feel they are doing wrong, they sin, and I too am guilty.

V. 13. The lesson closes with Paul's noble resolve. Let us make it our own.

1. No Christian has a right to all his rights. He is bound by the law of love to abstain from what he may think his rights, if, by them, others are led to sin.

2. Jesus in Matt. 18: 6, shows how serious a thing it is to lead even the weakest Christian into sin.

3. There are many things, such as taking wine, pleasure walking or driving on Sabbath, balls, theatres, &c., that some may claim not wrong. However that be, it is certainly not wrong to abstain for the sake of others who do think them wrong, and he who does so, acts the nobler part.

4. So far as strong drinking is concerned, there can be no question as to its ill effect; upon all who indulge, and abstinence both for our own sake and that of others is binding upon all.

5. A Christian's conduct must be regulated according to the effect of that conduct upon others. In judging of right and wrong, he is bound to consider the effect upon others. A thing right in itself may from this cause be wrong. The law of love is the highest of all laws and as binding as any. Obedience to it is not of choice.

Nov. 5. THE RESURRECTION.

Lesson, 1 Cor. 15: 12-26. Gol. Text, 1 Cor. 15-57.
Memory vs. 20-23. Catechism 57-59.

Last lesson was a practical one, to help the converts at Corinth; this is a doctrinal one to give them comfort. Read the whole chapter, also, the story of Christ's resurrection, in the Gospels and Acts, and 1 Thess. 4: 16, 17; 2 Cor. 5: 3-4, Phil. 3: 20, 21.

The heathen Corinthians did not believe in a resurrection. Different sects of their philosophers taught different systems but none of them taught personal immortality.

The lesson has two leading parts.

I. Vs. 12-19. The resurrection is shown to be a leading article of the Christian faith and to be bound up with the resurrection of Christ and based upon it. One of the facts that there was no contradicting was that Christ had arisen. Witnesses many there were to prove it, for they had seen the death, the burial, and had seen Him alive again. We make much, not too much, of the death of Christ, but we make too little of His resurrection. Paul in this section shows the sad conclusion if that resurrection be not true.

II. Vs. 20-26. This section deals with the certain, the character, and the blessed results, of the resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection of his people that shall follow. Now is Christ risen, and He is but the first fruits, the blessed after fruits will follow, will rise as he rose. "As in Adam," i.e., as all who are in Adam, the whole race, in him as their representative, die, "even so, in Christ," i.e., even so, all who are in Christ, in Him as their representative, shall be made alive.

Some grand truths follow Christ's resurrection.

1. It is the crowning proof that He is the Son of God. If He could not conquer death and come back from heaven, He could not prove that at the first He came from Heaven."

2. "It is the proof that death does not end all, that there is life immortal beyond the grave."

3. "It is a proof that our Saviour who could conquer death has power over all our enemies."

4. "It is the assurance of our own resurrection with spiritual bodies like unto His own glorious body."

From the character of the spiritual body of Christ after the resurrection we learn what our spiritual bodies will be like.

1. It was the same as before His death, for they recognized Him, and yet it had undergone a change for they did not know Him at first. So with our spiritual bodies.

2. It was raised above nature's needs for we do not read of hunger or weariness after He arose, so with our spiritual bodies.

3. It was above nature's laws, for He suddenly stood among them when they were in a room with the door shut, and, He as suddenly vanished again. So with our spiritual bodies.

4. They knew Him, so "we shall know each other there," and all the more that we will be looking for loved ones, which the disciples were not, after His resurrection.

5. "What a comfort is the resurrection to the noble souls in weakly, sickly, deformed bodies, yea to all, in bodies which grow old and decay."

6. "As the body is renewed thus by the resurrection changes, so may the soul scarred and marred by sin become glorious in beauty in Jesus Christ."

7. If we wish to be in the likeness of Christ at the resurrection we must take on that likeness now.