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Lesson IX. — Third Quarter,
For Aug. 29, 1909.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, 1 Cor. xiii, 1-13.
Memory Verse, 8—Golden Text, 1 Cor. xiii, 13—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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We have been reading in the Acts of people in many places who, having heard of the living and true God and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who gave Himself for our sins that He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, a people to represent Him here a little while and then share His kingdom and glory forever, truly received Him and were willing to endure anything for His sake if only they could win others to Him. Paul tells us in this epistle that he would endure anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ and that his aim was by all means to save some (chapter ix, 12, 22). Believers are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, called unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord to be laborers together with God, blood bought temples of the Holy Spirit who worketh in each one as He pleases, dividing to each His gifts severally as He will (chapters 1, 2, 9; iii, 9; vi, 19, 20; xii 4-11). If we had the choice of gifts one might prefer wisdom, another knowledge, another faith, another gifts of healing, another tongues, etc., but here Paul says by the Spirit that, while it is well to covet the best gifts, there is a more excellent way, the way of love, and that is our lesson today. To know and believe the love which God hath to us and to live in that love as manifested in Jesus Christ should constrain us to such yieldedness and restful confidence in Him that His choice for us as to place or manner of service will be always most satisfactory to us. Esther might have asked and received many things from the king's chamberlain when her turn came to appear before the king; but, being in herself fair of form and good of countenance, she asked nothing but what the keeper appointed (Est. ii, 7, margin, 15). If our aim is to please our King and be beautiful to Him we will be quite satisfied with all His appointments for us. Strangely, we have come to a time when the matter of speaking in tongues is very much on some minds, but a study of chapter xiv teaches us that it is better to utter words easy to be understood, even five such words, than ten thousand words which no one can understand (xiv, 9, 19). No name of God or of Christ is found in our lesson chapter; but, as one has said, a photograph of a dear friend does not require the friend's name on it to enable us to recognize it, and we have here a most beautiful word picture of the Lord Jesus, for in no one else was such love ever seen. It seems unnecessary to say that the word "charity" should be "love" as it is in the revised version, and it is evidently the love of John iii, 16; I John iii, 16; iv, 9-11. The love of God is the greatest thing mortals ever heard of, and the greatest love of mortals is but the faintest reflection of the infinite love of God. The first three verses of our lesson are most startling when we consider how much eloquence and oratory and knowledge and a kind of faith and giving of money and self sacrifice may all go for nothing—just wood, hay and stubble to be burned. When we think of the speaking and singing that abound simply for the money that is in them, and the many other things simply to obtain praise from men or from a sense of duty, and that nothing counts in God's sight that is not from love to Him, is it not all most heart searching? Then see in verses 4 to 7 the quality of this love. It is kind even to those who make it suffer, never jealous or envious or self assertive or proud, never seeks anything for itself, is never provoked, never thinks or speaks evil of any one, rejoices only in what is true and goes on bearing, believing, hoping and being all things for love's sake. It was truly never so seen but in Christ Himself, and yet He desires to reproduce that life in His redeemed ones (II Cor. iv, 10, 11; Gal. ii, 20) and will if we are only willing to die to self and let Him rule in our hearts. It means such a handing over of ourselves to Him that we have no say in anything any more, but that we just live in that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. This age in which we now live, with its teaching and tongues and knowledge, shall give place to a better age in which love shall be more fully seen on earth. There is nothing perfect now on our part. Everything is only in part, as far as our knowledge of God and manifestation of the life of Jesus are concerned, but then we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Even our bodies shall be like His, immortal, incorruptible (xv, 50-53; Phil. iii, 20, 21). While we shall not be truly of age and enjoy eternal life fully till the resurrection of our bodies, for which even such as Abraham and others still wait (Heb. xi, 39, 40), we should live more than we do in the power of the age to come and not talk and act so much like babes who live only on milk (chapter iii, 1-4). God's child in this world is not what he will be, but what he will have and see, not what he will see, but while here may receive fully and in childlike simplicity the revelation of God, exercising simple faith in what God says.

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