

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson VIII, November 24th, 1907.

WORLD'S TEMPERANCE SUNDAY.

Romans 14:12-23.

Golden Texts—Judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

There are certain questions or acts which are universally conceded to be right, and to come within the christian law of liberty. About these, people of religious intelligence have no question and do them freely.

There are other acts which are plainly prohibited. To do them is wrong and always wrong.

There are a large number of acts which are right or wrong according to the circumstances, and motives of their doing. How to determine these has perplexed every conscientious christian and teacher of practical morals.

To the early Christian Church, composed of Jews and Gentiles, these questions were presented. There were two Sabbaths, the Jewish Sabbath, or Saturday, and the Lord's day. Which should they keep? What should the Jews do about attending social feasts, weddings, etc. in Gentile homes, where meats forbidden the Jews were served?

Should they eat the meats which were upon the markets—a large portion of which had been, in part, offered to idols?

There are not a few similar questions continually confronting us with something wholesome and beneficial. Is it right to dance? To play cards? To play billiards? To go to the theatre? To attend parties? To use tobacco? Many liberties taken in regard to Sabbath observance and more especially comes the question of abstinence from alcoholic drinks and narcotics.

These matters are settled by ourselves, for ourselves according to the law of liberty ever remembering that "we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ".

We are taught to put no stumbling-block in others' way. Then let all use liberty to refrain from indulgence.

Our conduct in relation to all these questions must be guided by the great end and aim of living to promote the Kingdom of Heaven in ourselves and in the world.

Among a majority of the boys and young men, who may read these lines, there may be an inclination to indulge in the cigarette habit. This habit proves itself destructive to bodily strength, mental keenness and moral character, so much are these effects observed that our educators, business men and public officials are declaring that their doors must be closed against cigarette users.

Peloubet mentions twenty-seven well known and influential doors closed against cigarette users.

1. Athletic Clubs.
2. A business College.
3. Union Pacific Railway.
4. Omaha Schools.
5. Swift & Co., Packers, Chicago.
6. Marshall Field, dry goods, Chicago.
7. Life Insurance Companies (some).
8. Lehigh Valley Railroad.
9. United States Army positions.
10. United States Naval Schools.
11. Carson, Pirie & Scott, Chicago.
12. Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad.
13. Central Railroad, Georgia.
14. High Schools.
15. Ayer's Sarsaparilla Company.
16. John Wanamaker's, Philadelphia.
17. Morgan & Wright Fire Company.
18. Western Union Telegraph Company.
19. Burlington Railroad.
20. United States Weather Bureau.
21. Heath & Milligan.
22. Montgomery, Ward & Company.
23. Academy of North Western University.
24. Telephone Company, Cumberland.
25. N. Y., New Haven and Hartford Railway.
26. Pittsburg & Western Railroad.
27. West Superior Railway, Wisconsin.

We think, therefore, young people have no moral right or business judgment to drug their energies with tobacco.

G. W. T.

THE ART OF REJOICING.

"Rejoice in the Lord always." Phil.

IV. 4.—And this counsel is given by an old man who is now the prisoner of imperial Rome! It is not the enervating speech of the lotus land: it is a bracing exhortation ringing through the keen nipping air of difficulty and strife. Age is not frequently associated with such sunny exuberance of spirit. Its song is apt to "crack," its lights burn dim, its disposition becomes despondent. Age is so prone to become reminiscent, and memory is a fertile breeding ground of dark and tearful regrets. Age fondly dwells on "radiant morns" which have "passed away": it turns its eyes away from the east whence new mornings break. And so the psalm changes into a threnody, and minor tunes pervade the evening hymn. But here is an old man in whose vespers the minor note finds no place. Hard circumstances have not made him hard. Apparent failure has not soured him into a cynic. He retains his fine, appreciative sense of life's essential sweetness. He has not become moodily reminiscent of past glories and of vanished feasts. He feels the days before him. The pains of today are only the birth-pangs of a better to-morrow. The immediate difficulty is only a prickly burr which contains most toothsome fruit. Circumstances may impose restraints, they cannot create an orphanage. Rome may separate the apostle from his fellows, she is powerless to separate him from the Lord. Imprisonment still provides a room for two, and by no earthly conspiracy can he be bereft of his great Companion. The Lord is with him! And so the prison is ablaze with light. Old age glows with sunny optimism. The psalm of adoration rises night and day. And the captive sends forth to his fellow believers the invigorating counsel to "rejoice in the Lord always".

Now if this counsel proclaims an attainable ideal, it is very clear that Christian joy is a mood independent of our immediate circumstances. If it were dependent on our surroundings, then, indeed, it would be as uncertain as an unprotected candle burning in a gusty night. One moment the candle burns clear and steady, the next moment the blaze leaps to the very edge of the wick, and affords little or no light. But Christian joy has no relationship to the transient setting of the life, and therefore it is not the victim of the passing day. At one time my conditions arrange themselves like a sunny day in June: a little later they rearrange themselves like a gloomy day in November. One day I am at a wedding: the next day I stand by an open grave. One day, in my ministry, I win ten converts for the Lord: and then, for a long stretch of days, I never win one! Yes, the days are as changeable as the weather, and yet the Christian joy can be persistent. Where lies the secret of its gracious persistency?

Here is the secret. "Lo! I am with you all the days." In all the changing days "He changeth not, neither is weary". He is no fair-weather Companion, leaving me when the year grows dark and cold. He does not choose my days of prosperous festival, and refuse to be found in my days of impoverishment and defeat. He does not show Himself only when I wear a garland, and hide Himself when I wear a crown of thorns. He is with me "all the days"—the prosperous days, the days of adversity: days when the funeral bell is tolling, and days when the wedding peal is ringing. "All the days." The day of life! The day of death! The day of judgment!

Here, I say, is the secret of perennial joy. The all-vital relationship is not between me and fickle circumstance, but between me and an unchanging Friend. If I draw my water from the wells of cir-

cumstances, my resources are exposed to the peril of drought and convulsions. If I draw from the wells of salvation, the rich and bountiful supply shall be found "Springing up into eternal life." "There shall be shaken in the heart of the seas. . . . The Lord of hosts is with us!"

Now the apostle Paul had become an expert in "the practice of the presence of God". He had so exercised his spiritual senses that his discernment had become delicately sensitive and acute. He had attained to a fine "feeling" for God! Until now the Lord's presence was as evident in the prison as in the temple, as evident when he stood before Festus and Agrippa as when he met with the little company of praying women by the riverside at Phillippi. He "felt" his Lord everywhere, and therefore he could "rejoice in the Lord always". To realize the Lord is to "enter into the joy of the Lord", and "the joy of the Lord" becomes our strength.

In all his thinkings Paul's first thought was ever the Lord. All his purposes began in the Lord, and in the Lord they ended. He did not call on the Lord just when things had gone amiss, when he had lost himself in trespassing over a forbidden moor. To the apostle, the Lord was his Alpha! He consulted Him at the beginnings of things. He was also his Omega: in Him everything found its culmination. And there is no law in life more sure than this, that if the mind be thus centered and fixed upon the Lord, the Lord will be ever more and more clearly manifested, and the heart will be possessed by a quiet, sunny assurance which no circumstances can despoil and which will remain bright and increasing "even unto the end of the world".—Rev. J. H. Jowett, M. A. In Record of Christian work.

HOW TO BEGIN THE CONFERENCE YEAR.

Two suggestions claim attention: First, the spirit in which we should begin the work of the Conference year; secondly, the plans and methods we should employ.

The main thing is that first mentioned—the spirit in which we should begin the work of the year. Of course we all understand that we should begin as we hope to continue this work. It is easier to keep out of a rut than to get out. The plans and the methods will adjust themselves aright where the spirit of the workers is right. This is said on the assumption that the preacher is truly called of God and has special adaptability to his work. You aspire, my brethren, to the apostolic success that proves that you are in the true apostolic succession. Claim now, at the beginning of this Conference year, the fulfillment of that promise of our Lord: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The emphasis is on the present tense: "Lo, I am with you always." Do we realize this Presence with us in this Preachers' Meeting this morning? If so, the language of each heart will be that of the apostle: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me", that is, we can do all things that our Lord would have us to do. By the leadings of his providence and of the Holy Spirit, we will know what "all things" mean to each one of us individually. The sense of power is felt by the servant of God who feels that touch. To do all things through Christ means that in the pulpit you shall have liberty in the delivery of the message of your Lord. It means that spiritual perception that knows and chooses the word in season, the word best adapted to bring the people that hear you to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It means that at all times in your association with one another as preachers, and with all other persons, your religion shall be uppermost. That is to say, you are to act at all times and in all places in the spirit of the apostolic injunction: "Do all in the name of

the Lord Jesus." This injunction covers the whole ground.

As to methods, let us remember that we shall have to watch and pray if we would put our religion first and keep it first. There are many other matters that will claim and absorb a pastor's time if he is not on his guard. There are so many earthly wants that clamor for recognition; there are so many acquaintances whose tastes and habits tend to give a non-religious tone to ordinary social intercourse, that we need the wisdom which is from above to give us social tact as well as pulpit power. Let me suggest in connection with this allusion to pulpit power that pulpit common sense is a good thing to begin with and to continue during the Conference year. This means, my dear brethren, that it will be well for us not to make our prayers and our sermons too long. This is a mistake frequently made. The remedy for praying too long is earnestness. A man who wants one thing very truly does not ask for everything at once. The remedy for preaching too long is common sense in a glow—and this includes thorough preparation.

Let us seek to do good as we have opportunity, according to the command of our Lord. We cannot plan for opportunities except to a limited extent. But every day in the year we can bear in mind that we are laborers in the cause of Christ. Opportunities come to the man who is tuned for them. Men that are alive unto God do not merely recognize opportunities—they make them. Sometimes our well-meant endeavors will be repelled. But we will not lose the promised blessing: our peace shall return unto us in all cases where it is rejected by those to whom we should give it in the name of the Lord. And surely, my brethren, it would be better for us to be repelled by the rudeness or stung by the criticisms of unresponsive persons than to suffer the rebukes of our own consciences.

Let us begin the Conference year with a purpose in our hearts to pray more than we have done heretofore. To each one of us, as pastors and teachers, our Lord says: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." This is the condition of pulpit power, my brethren. Let us leave room for prayer in our methods. Let us pray more for one another, and criticize one another less. After you have made one earnest prayer for a brother out of the depths of your heart, you will feel closer to him ever afterwards—and somehow he will get closer to you.

Personal communion with God is the one essential condition of all Christianity in earnest. A rule is suggested for your pastoral visiting: Go where your Master would go, and go in his spirit. Go first to those who need you most—that is, to the poor, the sick, the sorrowing and the lost. Going to these with his message on your lips and his love in your hearts, you will meet the pitying Christ and get his blessing for yourselves and be made channels of blessing to them.

Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some has been. By brotherly counsel, united prayer, and closer fellowship, let us help one another during this Conference year. It will be worth while for us to begin and continue the work of the Conference year by a renewal of our vows, by service that is more abundant, and a fellowship among ourselves more like that which we hope to enjoy where, in the words of our ascended chief pastor and brother, Coke Smith, "the life will be fuller and the light will be clearer". There we will have what the apostle calls "the power of an endless life". Power, power, power! This worn and weakened frame thrills at the word. It will be sown in weakness, but it will be raised in power—that is, power to start with up yonder, and to increase forever—the power of an endless life. Glory to God for that word!