

The Sunday-School.

SECOND QUARTER,
LESSON III.—April 19.

THE LAW OF LOVE.

ROMANS 13: 7-14.

Study Verses 1-14.

TEMPERANCE LESSON.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*—Rom. 13: 10.

LEARN BY HEART.—Vs. 9, 10; I Cor. 6: 10; Luke 21: 34.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—Time. The Epistle to the Romans was written soon after that to the Galatians, probably early in the spring of A.D. 57. Place.—Written to the church at Rome from Corinth. Place in the History.—At the close of the three months' residence in Corinth of Acts 20: 3, the "wintering" of I Cor. 16: 6.

The Epistle was composed, seemingly, in the house of a Corinthian Christian named Gaius or Caius (Rom. 16: 23; see I Cor. 1: 14), dedicated by Paul to his amanuensis, Tertius. It was carried to Rome by Phoebe, a Christian deaconess, who was about to sail thither from Corinth. It was written to instruct the Romans in Paul's great doctrine, justification by faith, and to counteract the influence of Jewish unbelief. Coleridge says: "I think the Epistle to the Romans the most profound work in existence."

The thirteenth chapter of Romans deals with three subjects,—the Christian's relation to his rulers, his neighbors, and his own future. In these three divisions we shall find lessons regarding temperance,—in the nation, in social life, in the heart.

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS RULERS.—Rom. 13: 1-7. One of the matters most sorely perplexing to a Christian in apostolic times was his relation to his rulers. The vilest of idolatrous practices were upheld by the national authority. What should be the attitude of a Christian toward such a government? Paul was divinely led to give the wisest advice. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. The powers that be are ordained of God." Paul did not advise submission to laws that required what was contrary to the law of God. But he taught that even 'the worst government is better than the best anarchy.' Government is a divine institution. Christians may labor in every lawful way for its improvement. The question of the Christian's relation to rulers came up most commonly in the matter of tax-paying, which Paul specially considers. *Render therefore to all* (all men as well as all rulers) *their dues.* Whatever is due them from us. *Tribute.* Taxes paid by a subject nation. *Custom.* The tariff duty which would be paid to support the government. *Fear,* due authorities as judges and punishers of wrong-doing. *Honour,* due to the office held.

TEMPERANCE AND ITS RELATION TO THE NATION.—Since governments are divinely instituted, it is men's religious duty to defend, support, and

better them. Christianity, influencing the nations as Paul advised, has overthrown tyrannies, until now the people of the greatest nations are free to make their governments what they will.

The modern Christian's duty as a citizen is:—

1. To know about his nation's history, laws, rulers.
2. To obey the laws and get them obeyed.
3. To better the laws, if he can.
4. To elect good rulers, and support them.
5. To rebuke and oppose bad rulers.
6. To influence other citizens for good.
7. To train the young for noble citizenship.

Applying this to one of the most important questions,—the temperance reform,—the citizen's duty is:—

1. To know the temperance laws, and the attitude of rulers and candidates toward them.
2. To see that the temperance laws are enforced.
3. To agitate for better temperance laws.
4. To elect to office active temperance men, and uphold them.
5. To call on bad officials to enforce temperance laws, and seek their removal if they refuse.
6. To agitate for the temperance reform, by voice and pen.
7. To train the young in temperance,—in home, school and church.

Illustrations. Lord Wolseley, once commander-in-chief of the British army, said: "There are yet some great enemies to be encountered by the United Kingdom, but the most pressing enemy is drink. It kills more than all our newest weapons of warfare, and not only destroys the body, but the mind and soul also."

Sir Matthew Hale, a chief-justice of England, declared as the result of his wide observation that four-fifths of all crime is due to strong drink.

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS NEIGHBORS.—Vs. 8-10. Paul passes from civic to social duties. They are of two kinds:—

First: *Outward Obligations. Owe no man anything.* This does not forbid borrowing, but requires the payment of what is borrowed at the time when it is due; and, broadly, the fulfillment of obligations of service as well as of money.

Second: *The Obligation of Love. But to Love.* Without this, the performance of outward duties is cold, formal, and of little real service. *For he that loveth another, r.v., "his neighbor." Hath fulfilled the law.* Because no one that truly loves another will want to do what the law forbids, namely, injure him in any way. *For this.* "This" summary of the commandments. *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,* as sincerely, deeply, and constantly. *Love worketh no ill to his neighbor.* Love works positive good, but the fact that it prevents evil allows the apostle to say of it, *therefore love is the fulfilling* (r.v., "fulfillment") *of the law.*

INTEMPERANCE IN ITS RELATION TO OUR BROTHER MEN. Every one of Paul's injunctions in this section is opposed by intemperance.

1. The drunkard does not pay his

money debts (v. 8), wasting his money on his appetite.

2. He neglects his duties to society, such as the support of charities, churches, missions, reforms.

3. Drunkenness leads to the violation of all commandments (v. 9), notoriously to licentiousness, theft, and murder.

4. Drunkenness violates the laws against profanity, and requiring honor to parents and observance of the Sabbath.

5. Especially, drunkenness violates the sum of the commandments, the law of love. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor," but strong drink works nothing but ill.

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS OWN SALVATION.—Vs. 11-14. In the closing verses Paul draws a new and solemn argument for brotherly love and temperate living from the return of Christ to earth. *And that.* And all that duty (we perform). *Knowing the time.* r.v., "the season." Paul's words may just as truly be applied to the death of believers, when Christ comes to them, and to the coming upon earth of Christ's kingdom of righteousness. *That now it is high time to awake out of sleep.* The sleep of carelessness and sloth. *For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed, i.e.,* became Christians. The salvation Paul meant was deliverance from sin and sorrow: (1) for all the world at Christ's second coming, (2) for each Christian at his own death, and (3) gradually also in the unfolding of Christ's kingdom on earth. *The night is far spent.* Their night of trial and sadness. *The day is at hand,* when Christ will come again. *Let us therefore cast off,* as if they were a night robe. *The works of darkness.* The deeds of sin. *And let us put on the armour.* Whatever spiritual help God gives us. *Of light.* Armour appropriate to the light, the splendor of Christ's glorious appearing. *Let us walk about our daily tasks honestly.* Becomingly. *As in the day.* Scorning to do the deeds which men hide under cover of darkness, such deeds as Paul names. *Not in rioting and drunkenness,* which accompanies revelry. *Not in chambering and wantonness.* Suggesting the various forms of licentiousness. It seems strange that Paul should address such warnings to professed Christians, but they had just come out from gross heathenism. *Not in strife and envying.* The passions which break out in disputes. But put ye on, as both raiment and armour. *The Lord Jesus Christ.* We "put on" Christ in baptism as we identify ourselves with him and his cause. *And make not provision* (take no thought) *for the flesh.* Sensual desires and tendencies; great love for the things of the world. We are permitted to take thought for the body's needful clothing, food, shelter, etc., but not to fulfil the lusts thereof. To excite and gratify fleshly passions.

TEMPERANCE IN ITS RELATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS FUTURE.—Drunkards are barred from heaven (I Cor. 6: 10). The drunkard has forged a chain which binds his soul to sensuality, and holds it from the spiritual joys of heaven. To the drunkard, then, the thought of Christ's coming, at death or at the second advent, is a thought of gloom and terror. Whatever tends to defile the body or weaken it for God's service must be wholly discarded. So must whatever debases the mind.

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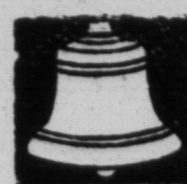
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