

Department of Christian Endeavor

"For Christ and the Church."

The March Consecration Meeting

BY THE EDITOR.

TOPIC: Paul's Ambition, and ours.

LESSON: 2 Cor., 5th chapter.

APPROPRIATE HYMNS: "Epworth Praises,"

2, 4, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 44, 45, 48, 56.

(Do not use the same hymns year after year. Use some of these.)

"Wherefore also we make it our aim (are ambitions), whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto Him."

By "ambition" as here used, is meant a desire to attain superior excellence in all that pertains to Christian character and life. Without such, we may never expect to rise above mediocrity, and with that we should never be content. George Whitfield's prayer was that God would make him an extraordinary Christian. It is easy to be as good as the average; but to rise to super-excellence is a harder matter. It is not, however, an impossible undertaking if we are moved by a strong, inflexible purpose, and maintain an intrepid spirit that will not be discouraged or turned aside from its aim.

The supreme purpose of the Apostle's life is clearly stated in our verse quoted above. He unhesitatingly announces that his constant endeavor, his daily aim, his one controlling ambition is to be well-pleasing to Jesus Christ.

This fixed habit of his life ruled him at all times, in all things, everywhere. It was independent of place or circumstance. It would be the same to him on earth or in heaven, whether in the body of out of it. He knew nothing higher, he could be content with nothing lower than this,—to be acceptable to his Lord.

This was his life principle, and if we are true to the opening statement of our Pledge, it must be ours. (Let the first sentence in the pledge be recited in concert).

There are at least three things embodied in this great text, which we should see clearly.

1. The basis of all Paul's ambition was *personal acceptance of Christ as Saviour*. The apostle rejoiced in the fact of his reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. He had experienced the new creation. He was constrained by the love that won him, to proclaim the saving power of the Gospel to others. Reconciled himself, his business was to make known the ministry of reconciliation to his fellows. As his personal acquaintance with Christ had brought him a new sense of life, he could not rest without seeking to introduce others to his Saviour that they might know it too.

This is imperative still. The first pleasing act on our part in the esteem of Christ, is that we trust Him for Salvation; that we commit ourselves to Him for the pardon of our sins, for peace of mind, for purity of heart. If we would be acceptable to Christ we must have a hearty faith in Him as our sufficient Redeemer.

2. Growing out of Paul's personal faith in Christ, there naturally develops a passionate longing to be like Him. So we can see his overwhelming desire for a *personal resemblance* to Christ in character.

Having seen the glory of his Saviour in His wondrous power to save, he is ambitious to behold the more glorious grace whereby he, as a saved sinner, may be transformed into the Divine likeness, until he comes to resemble his Lord in his own personal character.

And here is a great matter. Our aim must be simply to "get saved." That is at least but a part of our Saviour's ministry. He would truly save us by making us saints. To get to Heaven is not the highest ambition of the truly great soul. To be made heavenly is a much nobler desire. This was Paul's chief aim in the realm of character—to be like Christ. It must be ours if we would please our Lord.

3. The third element in Paul's purpose is evident. It was that of *personal reflection* of His Saviour's spirit in the wide realm of action.

To know Christ's Salvation we must trust Him, to resemble Him we must commune much with Him; but unless we act we shall lose Him. The main purpose is therefore one of usefulness. The constraining love of Christ moves us to take part in the ministry of reconciliation whereby the world of sinful men is to be brought back to God.

Paul's spirit was active. He must work for his Master no matter what the cost. And this was no light account. Read 2 Cor. 6, 4-10, and see how much was involved in his devotion to his Lord and his fellow-men. It was not an easy enterprise to which he gave his whole life. But it was worth all it cost. And no matter how hard it may seem to-day, to be what our Lord asks or to do what He says is worth while. And nothing less than this is.

Notice that such a purpose as is included in the three-fold analysis given above, is the best and only sufficient preparation for the Judgment. Paul had that in view, and was unafraid. So may we live that now and then, here and there, in time and eternity, on earth or in heaven, Christ shall be our all and in all, and our hearts rest content that His good pleasure is ours, and our lives acceptable before Him.

FORWORDS FOR THE LEADER.

Have your plan well arranged before-hand.

See that the Look-out Committee do their work in visiting the absentees from the last meeting, that they be present at this.

Have the pledge prominent, and see that its essential principle of loyalty to Christ, so well shown in this topic, is pointed out.

Expect your Associate Members to become active. Work for this, pray for this, plan for this, be satisfied with nothing less than this.

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBJECTS.

The following sub-topics may well be dealt with by members in the form of short papers, or brief addresses in the meeting:—

—How is this expressed ambition of Paul's, to please Christ in all things, the only one worthy of us as children of God?

—In what sense is pleasing Christ superior to serving Him? Or is there any difference?

—How will Paul's aim affect others if we make it ours? e.g., in social, commercial, civic, and political life?

—Which is the more commendable motive, desire to please Christ, or fear to displease Him?—Why?

—What will such an ambition as Paul's do for us personally if made the main controlling purpose of our lives?

—Illustrate the dominant influence of personality by showing how Paul's loyalty to Christ as a Person, was the supreme passion of his soul.

—What bearing did Paul's aim seem to have on his prospects and hopes beyond this life?

—What is the supreme test of a person's Christianity, affectionate obedience to Christ, or intellectual acceptance of creeds? Or, are both necessary? If so, why?

—Is it easy in these days, to be a true Christian? If not, what are some of the things that make it hard?

A Model Prayer-Meeting

Is intelligently planned by the leader. Should begin promptly at the time announced.

Needs, bright, hearty, inspiring singing throughout.

Requires many willing participants, to save monotony.

Is one in which the voice of prayer is heard, and the spirit of prayer felt.

Should pass without conscious slowness of time, and send all home in a praising mood.

Makes the members look forward with eager eagerness rather than reluctance, to the next one.

Must be the expression of privilege not duty on the part of the members, who go because they want to, not because they must.

Manifests the Saviour's presence in saving and strengthening grace so that souls are brought into the conscious joy of His pardon and power.

—You may say that you have never had such a prayer-meeting, but even so, that is no reason why you should not seek to have all the above features in yours.

A Voice From the Past

In looking over some old papers recently, we found the following brief report of what we remember as a soul-stirring address. The occasion was the Bay of Quinte Conference Epworth League Convention in Belleville, and the time fourteen years ago this month. Soon after you read this, the same Conference League's Convention will be in session in Cobourg. Many of the delegates there assembled will have heard the voice of the great man who then spoke. It may be that a few will, with the Epworth League, recall the speech in question. But whether or not, the words of the speaker were true then, are true now, and now as then, the Epworth League requires such an inspiring and heartening message.

The *Belleville Intelligencer* of Feb. 21st, 1896, said:

"Rev. Dr. Potts, of Toronto, gave an address entitled 'The Epworth League for Christ and the church.'"

This is an era for young people who are banded together under various names for religious work. The hope of the church of God is in the boys and girls of the Epworth League. The church should be sympathetic with the League. The supreme object of the League is work for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is out and out for the church and humanity. He expects us to be out and out for Him. If this were unanimous throughout the leagues of Canada, this would be Emmanuel's land. The easiest way to serve the Lord is to serve Him out and out. The soul must be in contact with God, must be in communication with Him.

"You can spell 'Sin' with one letter if you make the 'i' big enough."