

men in the army, and the order was issued:—Whoever is fearful, let him return, and depart from Mount Gilead." And what was the result? Twenty-two thousand men fell out of the ranks and went home. Afraid of the foe! If the order were given to the Church to-day, how many would retire? Young people, you call yourselves Christian soldiers. What battles are you ready to fight? Are you not afraid to make the attack? Are you not almost afraid of your own voice or your own shadow? Suppose Christianity were unpopular:—suppose Methodists were laughed at as they once were, what would you do? Would there be the same sort of stampede that took place in Gideon's army.

2. *The test of readiness.*—There were 10,000 men left after these 22,000 took to their heels. The 10,000 passed by the ford in the river. Every man was thirsty. They got down upon their knees and drank—all but a handful, who were so engrossed with the thought of fighting the Midianites that they would not take time to get upon their knees to drink. They scooped up the water with their hands and hurried on. There were only three hundred of them, and the Lord said in effect, "These are the men for me!" The others were not eager enough or thoughtful enough. They were not ready for the battle. They had not the faith that removes impossibilities. Don't blame those rejected ones before you examine your own case, young man, young woman. Are you ready for the struggles which your Christian profession calls upon you to face? Are you prepared to sacrifice your personal convenience or comfort for the Lord's cause? Do you lay more store by an evening party than the weekly prayer meeting? Do you think more of a concert than of public worship? If so, you will never make one of Gideon's three hundred.

WHAT KIND OF MEN WERE THEY?

This army of Gideon was chosen, says Miller, according to the personal fitness of the men to occupy the post of peril.

1. *They were picked men.* They were chosen out from others for their superiority. They were men of sterling character, rock-like intrepidity in the presence of danger, every man a hero. No weak hands or feeble knees appeared among them, but all seemed trustworthy to meet the emergency. It is not numbers that form the real strength of the Church of God, but men of conviction and decision of character. Men are needed who are "rooted in the faith," "grounded in love, and "established" in the hope of the gospel. The men that really do good are those whose piety does not flicker, but burns with a bright and steady flame—those who love fixed principles, whose eyes rest on the great realities of eternity, and who rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

2. *They had faith in their cause.* They believed in Jehovah as sustaining to Israel the relation of a covenant God. They had confidence in the promises that had been made. Their faith was of the practical sort—they acted in accordance with their belief. They had hope, therefore, in Israel's future, and believed from the signs before them that God was to arise and vindicate the honor of his cause in the eyes of the heathen nations. Such men make a church strong. They have buoyant hope in the triumph of the cause of Christ. They will not be discouraged. Their faith rises superior to every obstacle. They win the battle before they go upon the field. All hail to Gideon's band in the modern church!

3. *They were careful in the use of means.* The result was gained, not by direct miraculous agency, but through the instrumentality of Gideon's picked men. God's blessing rested upon the means they used and rendered them effectual. They made the fullest use of the facilities at their disposal, and left the issue with God. There was no fighting by proxy. Every man was so sternly

required at his post that he had to stand firm, as if on him depended the entire success of the hour. Thus it is in the Christian army. None can plead exemption from want of capacity. None dare to fold his arms and refuse to fight because he cannot bring down a Goliath, or turn the tide of battle by his personal bravery. None dare to sleep at his post because he cannot see any great good that can be accomplished by all that he can do. All must act, each in his place, if complete success is to be attained in any field of the Christian warfare.

4. *They were loyal to their leader.* They knew that Gideon did not occupy the position of himself, but that God had called him to it, and the band proved faithful to him whom God had chosen to become the liberator of their country. They became ardently attached to Gideon as their leader. Neither the numbers of the enemy, nor the falling away of so many comrades caused them for a moment to swerve from their purpose. We hear of no murmurs, no sinkings of heart, no thoughts of flight, nor laying down of arms in pure despondency at the hopeless character of the issue. But, fully confident of the result, they were all eye and ear on Gideon to announce the line of duty they should take. Hence there was prompt and silent obedience throughout the whole camp. When will the church militant learn that success is far in the dim distance, if indeed it is ever attainable, without loyalty to Christ as the Head of the Church, and faithfulness to those whom Christ has appointed as his representatives in leading the army of God. Close your ranks, Christians, watch your leader, obey his commands, and on to victory.

POINTS FOR THE PASTOR.

Draw the attention of the young people to the "Home Readings" in the EPWORTH ERA in connection with the topic expositions. These readings are important helps in the study of the topic. And it is also an inspiring thought to know that all the languages read the same passage of scripture every day. It would be helpful and interesting exercise to ask replies to the question, "what have you learned from the 'Home Readings' to illustrate the topic this week?" Take the readings in their order, Monday, Tuesday, and so on. Try it.

OCTOBER 1.—"OUR OWN CHURCH"

Psalm 112: 1-9.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Sept. 25, Christ and the Church... Eph. 4: 1-22-29
Tues., Sept. 26, The Head of the Church... 1 Cor. 12: 12-28
Wed., Sept. 27, One body, many members... 1 Cor. 12: 12-28
Thurs., Sept. 28, The Church as work... Matt. 24: 3-14
Fri., Sept. 29, The Church militant... Matt. 24: 3-14
Sat., Sept. 30, The Church triumphant... Isa. 60: 14-22

The holidays are over, the people have returned to their homes from the woods, and beach, and ocean shore; and now for practical work for Christ and the church. We have been worshipping in strange churches, or in open air services for some time, and we are thankful for the privilege. But now we return to "our own church," and resume our religious duties in connection therewith. And shall we not be more devoted, more loyal, more faithful than ever we have been? We ought. Invigorated in body, refreshed in mind, with superabundant energy and buoyancy—the stored-up forces of an extended vacation—we should be willing to expend a portion of it to advance the greatest cause that can engage the attention of men—the Church.

BISHOP SIMPSON'S MOTTO.

"We live to make our own church a power in the world, while we live to love every other church and exalts our Christ."

Commit this noble sentiment to memory.

Carry it from your memory into your heart. Convey it from your heart, and give it a place in your conduct. Work it out with wisdom and enthusiasm, and great will be the results to yourself and to the sphere of your influence. The motto expresses denominational loyalty and interdenominational fraternity. We love our own roof that protects us, our own garden where the flowers grow, our own trees where the birds sing, our own dear ones whose affections are entwined about our hearts. We love our own sweet home the best. But this does not prevent us from loving our neighbor and granting to him the rights which we claim for ourselves, and wishing him well in his family concerns. So, while we love our own church with intense and unlying affection, we also seek to love the church universal, and every branch of it where the gospel is proclaimed and the mission of Christ is carried forward. That denominational loyalty is the safest and best which declares: "The world must be conquered for Christ, and I love not only my own regiment, but every other that is carrying the battle to the gates."

There are some good people who think that the day of Christian unity can come only by ignoring denominations. Others think, with Bishop Simpson, that the desired unity can be brought about only by developing in all the various branches of the church so much of the spirit of Christ that without formal action the work will be accomplished. Let Christ rule in the heart of the individual churches, and the church universal shall become one, if not in external organization, yet in spirit and aim as its name happily indicates.

THE CHURCH OF OUR CHOICE.

Young people, we should endeavor zealously and persistently to make our own church a power in the community where it exists—a moral and spiritual power. And you may have thought how much of faith and prayer and self-sacrifice, and loyal service, and Godly living, this requires. The church of the future shall be largely what the young people of to-day make it. Do you see the responsibility upon you? Oh, for the spirit of the consecrated fathers in Israel to fall upon the children! In God's name be serious and prepare for the task committed to you. Don't stand indifferently by and see the splendid work of the pioneers of Methodism fall into ruin. We have left us a grand heritage—a church well organized, numerically large, and spiritually powerful. Shall it continue so? We, the young people of Methodism, must answer that question. And what must our church be to maintain its prestige and power? It must, as one has pointed out, have several characteristics:

1. *It must be a revival church.* Not a revival church merely in the sense of planning an evangelistic campaign for a number of weeks of the year, but a church in which *whenever* the revival spirit, and where effort is made constantly to lead men from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Our church is the visible expression of a revival, and we are not true to our traditions if we neglect those means by which the revival spirit is made prominent.

2. *It must be a witnessing church.* There are two ways of witnessing for God, two ways of showing the fact of conversion—the witness of the lips, and the witness of the life. Both should exist together. The character and conduct should indicate what the words of the mouth express. When there is a difference between the two, both are discredited. Methodists have always felt it their duty to tell to others what God had done for their souls. In this respect the early Methodists followed closely in the footsteps of the apostles. The word martyr meant originally one who witnessed for Christ. The first disciples went about telling in simple language the story of Christ and His salvation. If our church is to remain a power in the world, we must have a continu-