

Devotional Service.

By REV. T. J. PARR, M.A.

SEPT. 17.—"UNHESITATING CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST."

2 Tim. 2: 1-12.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Sept. 11.	The disciples.....	Luke 5: 1-6
Tues., Sept. 12.	The sick of the palsy.....	Matt. 9: 1-8
Wed., Sept. 13.	The silted land.....	Luke 9: 6-10
Thurs., Sept. 14.	The centurion.....	Matt. 8: 5-13
Fri., Sept. 15.	The malefactor.....	Luke 23: 39-43
Sat., Sept. 16.	The confidence we have in him.....	1 John 5: 13-21

Military service, says Plummer, was familiar to Paul, especially in his imprisonment. He frequently saw soldiers under drill, on parade, on guard, on the march; must have watched them cleaning, mending, and sharpening their weapons; putting their armour on, and putting it off. During his hours of enforced leisure, Paul no doubt compared these details with the details of the Christian life. Military service involved self-sacrifice, endurance, discipline, vigilance, obedience, co-operation, sympathy, enthusiasm, loyalty. And service for Christ requires the same qualities. Military service implies vigilant, unwearying, and organized opposition to a vigilant, unwearying, and organized foe. It is either perpetual warfare or perpetual preparation for it. And just such is the Christian life; it is either a conflict or a preparation for one.

THE SOLDIER'S DUTY.

One of the first things Paul had to learn in my military drill as a recruit was obedience. I had to obey orders whatever the result was. And this obedience implied confidence in the drill sergeant. Later on in my military career the quality of obedience became still more imperative, and confidence in the commanding officer became correspondingly more fixed. And the soldier on the field of battle knows that without unqualified confidence in the commander, and unhesitating obedience to orders, there is little hope of victory. It is often very hard for the soldier to render obedience on duty because he has no confidence in the judgment of his superior officer. But this lack of confidence does not excuse him from doing what he is told to do. The soldier is simply to obey orders.

"Thou shalt not make reply,
Thou shalt not to reason why,
Thou shalt but to do, and die."

The Christian must learn obedience. Having supreme and well-grounded confidence in his commander, he follows his orders. His superior officer can make no mistakes, and the result of loyalty must be final and complete victory.

BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATION.

It is said that the grandfather of the present Emperor William II, of Germany, was accustomed to sleep on the hardest bed he could obtain, and that he wished all of his relations to become accustomed to the hardest kind of discipline in order that they might be qualified to become real leaders of their nation. How much more is such hardness demanded of the Christian soldiers! His work is of such a character that to be weak and cowardly in the midst of hard surroundings means to fail. One of the things needed for the young people of Methodism is discipline. So many shrink their duty; so many are seeking for the easy things to do; so few are bringing themselves into subjection to the will of Christ; too many are soldiers on parade days—at conventions and anniversaries, at social gatherings and excursions—and are absent from roll call when the important detail work of Christ's army is to be done. Such are only

playing with the work of God. They have not disciplined themselves to do hard things. They need much to learn Paul's preparation to Timothy: "Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

DON'T GET TANGLED.

The soldier is wholly devoted to his profession, and his term of service is spent either in actual warfare, or in preparation for it. He abandons all other occupations; they would interfere with his efficiency and with his prospects of promotion. He has one object in view—to become a successful soldier, loyal to his sovereign, faithful to his commander, obedient to his orders, victorious in the conflict. What would prevent the accomplishment of this, his highest ambition, is cast aside. So the Christian soldier, if he is to render good service, must not be entangled in worldly affairs. Notice, not *entangled*—not that he can ignore them or neglect them, for, in their place, they are important and should be earnestly and successfully prosecuted—but he must guard against these secular matters interfering with the obedience he owes his heavenly Commander. The young Christian may entangle himself by a worldly spirit, or by evil associations, or by any business or pleasure that prevents him from displaying the spirit of Christ, and from proving faithful to his whole duty. The fact is, young people, you have your *general*, and your *special* religious duty. Your *general* religious duty is to apply Christian principles in all your secular occupations. Your *special* religious duty is to be faithful to Christ and the Church in your attendance upon the means of grace, the divinely appointed means for your own growth in moral and spiritual things, and for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth; and in the practical carrying out of the spirit and teachings of your religion in all your relations with your fellow-men; and anything that prevents you from attending to this *general* and this *special* religious duty will *entangle* you, and must at all hazards be given up.

EFFORT AND VICTORY.

Whatever we get we must fight for it. Conquest is gained only by effort. Paul passes from a military to an athletic figure of speech when he says, "A man also strives for masteries." The athletes are set apart for strict discipline so that they may build up their strength. They are kept from luxury, from dainty meats, from luscious drinks; they are driven, tormented, distressed. The harder their labors in training, the greater their hopes of victory. So, sturdy virtue, and steadfast moral endurance are obtained by stern discipline. Don't do as you feel, but do as you ought. Bring all your powers under the control of the voice of duty. If necessary heed the poets rule:

"Scorn delights and live laborious days."

and by so doing you will have the delights which do not pass away with the moment, but which abide as part of the enrichment of the soul.

SIDE-LIGHTS.

1. Religion is adapted to all conditions of life.
2. Obedience is the pathway of safety and success.
3. Confidence in Christ begets inspiration in toil, and faithfulness in the discharge of duty.
4. The highest prizes in religion are not secured without self-denying effort.
5. The true Christian is identified with the interests of his fellow-men. He is not a recluse. He seeks the open field to display his prowess.
6. Pickets are sent to the outskirts of the camp to give signal of the earliest beginning of the attack. So the Christian to avoid entanglement must be watchful against first dangers.
7. Strive lawfully! How? First, by

starting right—repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, in all subsequent effort, follow not your own inclinations, but know and obey the will of Christ.

8. Endure—that is a great word. It means going through hard things. This we must do if we would accomplish much for God. What makes it seem harder is that we must endure as seeing him who is invisible. But my grace is sufficient.

9. Those who believe in Christ and do his will have certain reward. And reward is not merely a prize, but a necessary result of the good life. To have the full reward we must keep the rules of the arena—self-control, self-sacrifice, effort.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

Keep the three prominent points of the topic before the meeting: confidence in Christ; obedience to Christ; endurance for Christ. There is a military ring in the topic scripture—select hymns appropriate to this script. If you have a military member in your league ask him to give a few minutes' talk on the discipline of the army, and by it illustrate the topic.

SEPT. 24.—"GIDEON'S BAND."

Judges 7: 1-25.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Sept. 18.	Saul's Band.....	1 Sam. 10: 17-27
Tues., Sept. 19.	David's Band.....	1 Sam. 11: 10-16
Wed., Sept. 20.	Christ's Band.....	Mark 3: 14-19;
		John 15: 16
Thurs., Sept. 21.	Working in God's way.....	John 15: 16
Fri., Sept. 22.	Not by might nor power.....	Zech. 4: 1-10
Sat., Sept. 23.	Whatever He saith, do.....	John 2: 1-11

One of the most interesting and suggestive of all bible narratives is this one of Gideon and his band of brave men. In it we find the sovereignty of God, and the responsibility of man—the wisdom of the divine, and the courage of the human. The lessons are clearly taught that, in the advancement of divine truth, it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," and that God cannot work without the co-operation of human instrumentality. When we learn these two great principles, young people, and apply them in our faith and practice, we are in possession of two principal factors in the working out of character, and in the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

THE FACTS OF THE CASE.

Observe some of the events leading up to the scene of our topic scripture. There is the oft-repeated story of the unfaithfulness of Israel. The children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. Indulgence in sin—coming under the power of sin—suffering the consequences of sin! It is ever thus—sin, captivity, suffering.

Then Israel prayed unto the Lord, and with the prayer, promises of repentance, faith and obedience; and the Lord heard and answered. Deliverance came. This, too, is a common experience with the people of God—distress, devotion, deliverance. In response to the prayer of the people, a leader was chosen. The one selected was not a well-known personage, conspicuous for his wisdom and bravery, but a new man who, people thought, had little qualification for the important task. He was busy at his appointed duty for the day when the summons came, threshing wheat for his father. The path of duty was the path of promotion. And this man Gideon became commander-in-chief of the forces which were to put Midian to flight and assert once more "the Lord has set his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all."

THE SIFTING PROCESS.

In selecting the army that was to win this great victory two tests were made, the test of courage, and the test of readiness.

1. The test of courage.—There were 32,000