

our souls. He seeks each of us by the inner voices of our hearts and minds, by those strange whisperings which sometimes we hear, by the convictions of duty and truth which at times flash across our inmost being. He is seeking us by our unrest, by our yearnings after we know not what, by our dim dissatisfaction which insists upon making itself felt in the midst of joys and delights, and which the world fails to satisfy as much as it fails to interpret. In these and in other ways the Shepherd is seeking, and happy are they who will be found of Him.

2. **THE SEARCH INFECTUAL.**—It seems absurdity, and yet it is a grain of truth in every life—that Christ's effort can fail and be thwarted. Not that His search is careless, but that we shroud ourselves in darkness through which His love can find no way. The infinite love of Christ is free from all blame. God appeals to us in the strongest, tenderest ways, and says, "What more could have been done to thy vineyard that I have not done unto it?" Nothing has been left undone on God's part; but men turn away from Christ's appeals, and are unwilling to have this man to save them, or to rule over them. And one great reason for this resistance of divine love is that men do not believe that they need that love. Some think they are in the flock when they are not. Some have no taste for the sweet pastures that are provided, and would rather stay where they are. It is solemnly true that we do not need to do anything to put the Shepherd away. A deaf ear hears not. "I called and ye refused. I stretched out my hands and ye none regarded." That is all! That is what we do, and that is enough to miss the heavenly music for ever.

3. **THE SEARCH PROLONGED.**—"Until he finds it." That is a wonderful and merciful sentence. It indicates the vastness of Christ's perseverance, and patient forgiveness. Men tire of searching. Can a mother forget or abandon the seeking after a lost child? Yes! if it has gone on for so long as to show that further searching is hopeless, she will go home and nurse her sorrow in her heart. It is another thing that the word "until" indicates, viz., the possibility of bringing back those who have gone farthest away and have been longest absent. The world has a great deal to say about incurable cases of moral deformity. Christ knows nothing about 'incurable cases.' And in accomplishing this task, our Leaguers must remember, that it is one by one, and not in the mass, that souls are saved. Jesus saves the Samaritan woman by convincing her of the depth of her need; He saves Zaccheus by inviting him to receive Him into his house as his guest and Redeemer; He saves Nicodemus by showing him the necessity of being born from above before he could enter the kingdom of heaven; and He saves Mary Magdalen by delivering her from the power of seven evil spirits. Oh, that each Leaguer of the eighty thousands in the Canadian Church would win at least one soul for Christ during this bright new year.

4. **THE JOY OF FINDING.**—Christ experienced a rapture of delight when He found a lost sheep. Witness His bearing at the well of Sychar when His joy over the repentance of the woman of Samaria made Him forget hunger, inasmuch that the disciples wondered if anyone had given him to eat. That joy, continued Bruce, hoped for and experienced, made all His burdens light, made even the cross itself, abhorrent to His sensitive nature, more than bearable. Then, it is the Good Shepherd himself that rejoices over his own recovered property; but so vast and expansive is it, he calleth his whole celestial family to rejoice with him. In this sense, it is joy "in the presence of the angels of God," they catch the flying joy, sharing it with the Great Deliverer. But this joy over the successful finding is terrestrial as well as celestial. There is joy among men as well as among angels. The poet speaks of "the luxury of doing good." But the ecstasy of soul ex-

perienced by the one who is instrumental in saving a soul from death is a foretaste of heaven itself, is a paradise possessed. Have you ever known that joy, fellow-worker!

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

2 Chron. 15: 2; Ps. 27: 4, 8; Prov. 8: 17; Matt. 6: 33; Luke 19: 10; Col. 3: 1; Neh. 8: 10; Ps. 126: 5; Rom. 14: 17; 1: 9, 14; 1 Thess. 2: 19; Acts 8: 39.

FEB. 19.—"A MISSIONARY CHURCH." (A MISSIONARY MEETING.)

Acts 13: 1-12.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Feb. 13. The Church commissioned. Acts 1: 6, 8. Tues., Feb. 14. Witnessing in Jerusalem. Acts 4: 23-33. Wed., Feb. 15. Witnessing in all Judaea. Acts 1: 14. Th., Feb. 16. Witnessing in Samaria. Acts 8: 5-17. Fri., Feb. 17. Unto the uttermost part. Acts 13: 1-12. Sat., Feb. 18. Except they be sent. 2 Cor. 10: 16; Rom. 10: 14, 15.

The Church at Antioch, from which went forth the first missionaries, was a true church. Its chief president was the Holy Spirit. Its ministers had various gifts, prophets, teachers, missionaries. Its membership was mixed, not confined to one class, but composed of Jews and Gentiles. Its doctrine was evangelical, consisting of the tenets of the Gospel. Its worship was scriptural, including fasting and prayer. Its spirit was missionary, sending forth the first evangelists to the heathen. From such churches all through the ages, great religious lights have come to evangelize and bless the world. If you want faithful and efficient foreign missionaries, look well to the home church.

1. **WHO WERE THE FIRST MISSIONARIES?**—Their homes shall be remembered and honored as long as the world stands. In the scroll of history's greatest heroes and benefactors, these men shall find a permanent place, the first missionaries of the Cross, Barnabas and Saul. These were men of faith, gifts and graces. They were first converted, then consecrated. They were men of fine natural endowment, and of broad culture and experience, fitting sample of the men whom the modern Church should send to the missionary field. These two men were both prophets and teachers, two important offices in the early Church—a prophet being one who authoritatively uttered divine communications; a teacher, one who had the gift of teaching and explaining what the prophet uttered.

2. **HOW WERE THEY CALLED TO THE WORK?**—It is correct to say that these first missionaries received both an internal and external call.

(a) *The call came to the Missionaries themselves.*—We cannot state definitely by what means the Holy Spirit voiced His will to these men. The Spirit speaks to men by conscience, by reason, by providence, by the Word, and by speaking unmistakably within the soul, so that there is no doubt as to the way to be pursued. Had these men not the moral conviction and strength wrought by the personal call, it might have been difficult to persuade them to undertake so arduous an enterprise. But they had received their marching orders from King Immanuel, and with enthusiasm they entered upon the work.

(b) *The call came in outward form to the Church.*—Without the authorization of the Church they were not to proceed. The work of carrying the Gospel into regions beyond may be done to some extent by private individuals; but the duty of sending the Gospel into all the world rests with the Church in its corporate capacity. Hence ambassadors should be sent in its name and by its sanction.

(c) *When given?*—"As they ministered unto the Lord and fasted." They ministered to the Lord and fasted. The inference is that either the whole body of the Church or its leaders, were at this time seeking heavenly light and guidance on this very

point—the carrying of the Gospel into other lands. How true it is! If we desire to do great things for God and His Kingdom, we must seek the Spirit of grace and supplication. The individual believer has made his best progress in this spirit, and the Church is never prepared for its important duty without it.

(d) *By whom given?* This call was given by the Holy Spirit, the invisible, but ever-present and divine representation of Jesus Christ, whom Christ promised to send as the Guide and Teacher of His Church, after He had withdrawn His bodily presence. And the same Spirit must still call forth the Church's ministers and missionaries.

(e) *Their departure.* After their ordination to the missionary office Barnabas and Saul were sent from the Church at Antioch with the fervent prayers of the people, commending them to heaven for protection on their journey, for assistance in their labors, for success in their enterprise. Away they went to carry the light of truth and life into darkened understandings and benighted hearts, to proclaim the message of salvation to a lost world, to bring the nations into loyal submission to the King of kings—an errand sublime in its conception and magnificent in its execution. Those people of Antioch Church looked forward doubtless to the time when their first missionaries, now setting forth, would return with tidings of what great things God had done by their hands. And this actually happened (Acts 14: 27).

WORK REMEMBERING.

1. A missionary is God's man, in God's place, doing God's work, in God's way, and for God's glory.

2. The whole advance of Christianity has been a missionary movement. From the time that Paul went to Cyprus and Asia to the latest missions of any Board in America, Christianity has been a missionary religion.

3. A missionary has his own particular mission in the church. Some are best for regular teachers, but would be failures as evangelists or missionaries. Some are splendid evangelists who would be of far less account as regular pastors or teachers.

4. The Holy Spirit guides the Church now as He did in the early time. And in how many ways! The Young People's Societies, the Modern Sunday School, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Missionary organizations, the Bible Societies, and other developments of Christian activity have been as really inspired by the Holy Spirit as was the sending of the first two missionaries.

5. How to find our mission. It is of first importance that we find out what that mission is, and enter upon the performance of our Father's business. We may find this in the same way that Barnabas and Saul did: (a) The Holy Spirit will teach us. The promise is as true to us as to them. (b) We shall find the will of the Spirit by prayer and self-surrender, that is, by intensely earnest seeking, with a complete yielding to God, to do with us as He will. (c) The knowledge of our work will come gradually to us, as we prove our fitness, and are led on in the duties and work that come to us day by day.

6. A missionary's requirements: (a) A call from the Holy Spirit. (b) Ordination from his brethren. (c) Recognition by the Church. (d) A definite sphere of labor. A missionary's inspiration: (a) The divine call concerning him. (b) The Spirit's impulse within him. (c) The Church's prayers behind him. (d) The sighing of the heathen world before him.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.

Num. 8: 14; Acts 9: 15; Matt. 9: 38; Rom. 10: 15; Eph. 3: 7, 8; Ps. 74: 20; Matt. 28: 19, 20; Rom. 10: 14, 15; Ps. 68: 31; Acts 28: 28; Ps. 72: 8-11; Isa. 9: 7; Zech. 14: 9; Matt. 13: 33; Rev. 11: 15.