

1. The assurance of God's Word. In the Bible, which is the Word of God, we find the distinct declaration that if we repent and believe we shall be saved. We are told that if we come to Jesus he will in no wise cast us out. The promises are explicit, certain, plain. God does not, will not, cannot deceive. And when we comply with the conditions we may be sure that we shall be saved by God, and become his spiritual children.

When a lad, father asked us boys to pile wood, and under the last stick we would find five cents. We worked away, and father arrived in time to see the last stick piled, and gave us the reward. We fulfilled the conditions and received what was promised. So God promises that on the fulfillment of conditions which he has prescribed we shall be saved. We have his word for it, and that is enough.

2. The testimony of our own hearts. The foundation of this testimony is laid in numerous texts of scripture which describe the marks of the children of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." That is, as many as are led by the Spirit, into all holy thoughts, and righteous actions, they are the sons of God. Our hearts testify to us, whether we are thus led. And when we are thus led, we conclude on the assurance of God's Word, that we are the sons of God.

Take some passages from the first Epistle of St. John. "Hereby we know that we do know him, if we keep his commandments." 2:3. Our hearts testify whether or not we keep God's commandments, and if we do (on the basis of faith), then the Word assures us that "We know God." "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him." 2:5.

"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." 2:29.

"Hereby we know that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his spirit." 4:13.

Now, here are plainly set forth the marks of the followers of Christ:

"If we keep his commandments;" "Whoso keepeth his word;" "Every one that doeth righteousness;" And as many as are led by the Spirit of God.

If these marks are evident in our hearts and lives, then we have God's Word for it, that we are the sons of God. This is rational evidence, the witness of our own spirit, our reason, our understanding. If then we have the consciousness that we are inwardly conformed to the Spirit of God, to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy and truth, doing these things which are pleasing in his sight, then we are assured by the testimony of our hearts to these things, that we are the children of God.

Illustration.—Oxygen is a colorless, tasteless, odorless gas. It sustains life and supports combustion. It forms 20 per cent. of the atmosphere. By composition with hydrogen in the proportion of two to one, it forms water. When these characteristics exist the element is oxygen. So when the above characteristics exist, the person is a Christian, and is thus assured of the fact.

3. The testimony of God's Spirit.—How does the Spirit of God "bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." It is hard to find language in the words of men to explain "the deep things of God." But we might say that the testimony of the Holy Spirit is "an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me and given himself for me; that I am the blessed out and I, even I, am reconciled to God."

You notice this is different from the witness of our own spirit. The witness of our spirit is based upon certain char-

acteristics inward and outward, certain changes in the manner of thinking, and the manner of acting. The witness of God's Spirit is a divine communication to the soul of its acceptance with God. It is clear that the witness of God's Spirit must precede the witness of our own spirit. For knowledge of acceptance with God must precede knowledge of the changes which follow acceptance.

Illustration.—Suppose an apple-tree to be conscious of its existence, and of its actions. The tree is planted, and begins to grow. It is conscious of life—the life that makes it grow. The second year it puts forth flowers and bears fruit. It is now conscious of bearing fruit. It is now conscious of existing life, and then conscious of producing fruit. So with the Christian, he is first conscious of divine life imparted to him by the Holy Spirit, then is conscious of the fruits which are produced as a result of this life—the divine life within. The first is the witness of God's Spirit. The second is the witness of man's spirit.

4. How may we distinguish the true witness from a delusion? If ye should still inquire, How does the Spirit of God witness with our spirit so as to exclude all doubt on our part, the answer is to hand.

(a) As to the witness of our own spirit, the soul evidently perceives when it loves God, and delights in Him; just as when it loves a friend and delights in his companionship. Hence, he that loves God, that delights in him with a humble joy, and obedient love, is a child of God. Thus, a Christian man can in no wise doubt of his acceptance with God, of the fact that he is a child of God.

(b) As to the certainty of the witness of God's Spirit with our spirit. How can we be assured of this? It cannot be explained. The manner of its taking place cannot be understood. But the fact still remains. The fact we know, namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption. And while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship than he can doubt of the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of its light and glory.

Consequently, we are assured of our acceptance with God (1) from the assurance of his Word; (2) from the testimony of our own spirit; (3) from the testimony of the Spirit of God.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" Thanks be unto God who giveth us to "know in whom we have believed," who hath sent forth the Spirit of his son into our hearts, crying "Abba Father," and "bearing witness with my spirit that I am a child of God."

Let us see to it, that not only our lips but our lives, show forth his praise. If we have this blessed hope in ourselves, let us purify ourselves as he is pure. While we behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called "the children of God," let all our thoughts, words and works be a spiritual sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, through Christ Jesus.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

This topic presents one of the distinctive doctrines of Methodism, the precious doctrine it is. Do all in your power to lead the young people to an intelligent understanding of its meaning and its application to their own experiences. Have four brief papers or addresses prepared by members of the League as follows:

I can know that I am saved (1) By the assurance of God's Word. (2) By the testimony of my own spirit. (3) By the testimony of God's Spirit. (4) How may I distinguish the true witness from a delusion? You will find help on all these inquiries in the foregoing exposition, which contains much of John Wesley's putting of the case.

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APRIL 27.—"SAMUEL'S CALL."

1 Sam. 3, 1-12.

UNION MEETING WITH THE JUNIORS.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Apr. 21. The child's study Ps. 34, 11-22
Tues., Apr. 22. The child's purity Ps. 119, 1-36
Wed., Apr. 23. The child's home Prov. 3, 1-6
Thurs., Apr. 24. The child's honesty Matt. 18, 1-6
Fri., Apr. 25. The child's duty Prov. 6, 1-3
Sat., Apr. 26. The child's kingdom Matt. 19, 13-15

Samuel, the last of the Judges, the first of the prophets, whose name means "Asked of God," when very young, was taken by his mother to Eli, the High Priest, at Shiloh, the religious capital of Israel, and dedicated to the service of the Lord. He lived in a time of general religious decline, when the word of the Lord was "precious," "rare." Though living in the temple he was not without great temptations, for the active sons of Eli were ever setting him a bad example. Yet he kept his own life and heart pure amid all the surrounding sin. His early call to be a servant of Most High God is full of instruction and encouragement to those of us who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

1. God calls His workmen, both small and great, and usually from lowly places. Moses, from tending sheep, became the great law-giver of his people; Joshua from being the servant of Moses to become the leader of Israel's host; Gideon from threshing wheat to become a general and a judge; David from being a shepherd to become a king; Elisha from ploughing with oxen to become a mighty prophet of the Lord; Simon and Andrew, James and John from fishing to become "fishers of men"; Martin Luther from a humble convent to become the torch-bearer of the Reformation; William Carey from a cobbler's bench to become the founder of modern missions; D. L. Moody from a shoe-stor to become the great flaming evangel of the nineteenth century. So Samuel was called from the simple duty of operating temple doors and lighting and trimming lamps to become the greatest judge and prophet Israel ever had.

God as truly calls us to His service to-day. If Samuel was called from such lowly duties to a great life-work, is it not possible for you to do some of us from our lowly work? But it is only those of us who are faithful in the lowly duties that God will entrust with the higher service. Samuel was faithful in the little things given him to do, and though a young man, he ministered to the Lord. We must not think that ministering to the Lord is only preaching and praying, and teaching, and doing great services; little things, if done in Christ's name, are ministries just as beautiful and as acceptable as the greatest things. "The things which men call like Samuel, we can open the temple doors and light and trim the lamps by feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, caring for the poor, comforting the troubled, bringing our associates to the Sabbath-school and League and church services, and when we perform such little ministries to others, Christ tells us we are doing them to Him. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me."

2. The call came to Samuel when he was seventeen, his heart was open to divine influence. God spoke to the youthful Samuel—obedient; not to the aged Eli—disobedient in not correcting his wicked sons. It has ever been so. It was to Abram, not to Lot, that God revealed his purposes, and Hagar, not Abram's heart was open to God; Lot's to Egypt and her voices. It was to John, not Judas, that Christ held such intimate fellowship, revealed his mysteries of His mission, and the glorious