

Devotional Service.

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

SEPTEMBER 21.—"THE FULLNESS OF GOD; HOW SECURED"

Eph. 3, 14-21.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Sept. 15. God in His church Eph. 1, 15-22
Tues., Sept. 16. God in His Book Jer. 31, 34-34
Wed., Sept. 17. God in His children John 1, 9-16
Thurs., Sept. 18. The stature of Christ Eph. 4, 7-16
Fri., Sept. 19. The Spirit unmeasured John 3, 27-36
Sat., Sept. 20. Complete in Him Col. 2, 6-12

Too many Christians stop short of full-orbed spiritual development. They are satisfied with a partial enjoyment, a limited appropriation of the divine provision for moral and spiritual strength. Such a state of things reminds one of unsightly foundations of buildings that have been abandoned without the superstructure—unfinished work. No one should be religiously contented until he has brought his whole life, inward and outward, into subjection to the will of Christ. He builds too low who has not this plan of moral architecture constantly before him as a model: "That ye might be filled with the fullness of God."

A DIVINE MODEL—THE FATHER.

In the attainment of our Christian purpose, we have a perfect ideal, a Divine model, an enduring inspiration—"The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The central figure, the central object of love, the central authority in the great family name is that of the Father. The saints are known as sons of God. What an honor to bear such a name! In the early times the father's name was given to all his descendants, and often became the basis of tribal union. A whole tribe or clan felt ennobled by the name they bore, and acquitted themselves well in order to uphold the honor of their name, and the dignity of their family. So believers bear the Father's name, and that name becomes the ground of Christian activity. The great host of the redeemed feel honored beyond measure by the name they bear, and their aim and determination always should be to uphold the fame and glory of the name, and the distinguished dignity of the family.

AN ILLUSTRATION.

I have read of a lad, who, in his wanderings about the world, kept near at hand his father's picture. When tempted to do wrong he would look at the noble features of his father, endeared to him by a thousand acts of love, and say, "The son of such a father must never do a wrong." When the children of the highest contemplate the character and love of their Father—the eternal God, intimately revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, they must be thrilled to say, "We cannot sin—our Father is too holy, great, and good. We must honor our name. We must maintain the family dignity. We are sons of God!"

NOBLE CHARACTERS—THE CHILDREN.

The members of God's family are not all upon the earth. All who dwell in this visible scene can think of kindred souls that have vanished from us into the invisible. These does Jesus keep dwelling near our hearts; making still one family of those in heaven, and those on earth.

"One family we dwell in him,
One church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

The good of every age are made into a glorious family of the children of God. The part of the family in heaven is already provided for. The more needy, and tempted, and human part of the family on earth are, also ensured final victory of the condition of faithfulness, for they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." The church militant and the church triumphant are one—an exhibition of "the love that cannot be lost amidst immensity, but finds the surest track across the void." Meditate, young people, upon this privilege until its magnificence takes possession of you,

"Till the dilating soul, enrapt, transfused,

Into its mighty vision passing—there
As in her natural form, swells vast to heaven."

As children of the highest, the qualities we exemplify are love, obedience, service—love for the Father; obedience to his will; service in his name.

HOW PREPARED.

1. Inner spiritual equipment. "Strengthened by might by his spirit in the inner man." This is God's way. He does not make us members of his family by changing the features of the outside, but by introducing the divine life upon the inside. Physical form begins with physical life. And spiritual beauty begins with spiritual life; and becomes permanent by the continuous existence of spiritual life. Moreover, strength for service, resistance of evil, power of endurance, is not a result of altered surroundings—a path made smooth for easy walking, but is a result of the strengthening of the "inner man" by the might of the Spirit of God. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith produces internal beauty—feeling, intellect, will, are in harmony with the eternal personality in the image of whom man was created. As a consequence, eternal moral beauty will be constantly displayed as the flower of spiritual life.

2. Right relations upward and outward. "Being rooted and grounded in love." When Christ lives in the heart love is shed abroad there, and becomes the genial soil in which our graces grow, and the basis of all thought and action. Love is strength, the most reliable, sustaining, and victorious kind of strength. And its strength is only equalled by its beauty. Believers are to know this love, than which no knowledge can be deeper, grander, more satisfying, more enduring, more sublime.

Remember, also, that love, as spoken of in Scripture, is not a mere emotion, but is a right relation of the soul upward—to God; and a right relation of the soul outward—toward men. In other words, it is a right conception and performance of our duty to God and man.

3. Unfailing source of strength. "That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." A comprehensive prayer, implying that the believer may gain the sum-total of God's gifts, be filled in every capacity of his nature with the whole plenitude of God. The spiritual strength and beauty consequent upon this divine endowment is the highest gift of all. It becomes the motive-power that gives movement and direction to the whole man.

AN ILLUSTRATION.

Look at that fine ocean steamship—a wonderful combination of strength and beauty. Everything seems as perfect as engineering science can make it. But there is something wanting. It is a fatal defect. For lacking it, the whole craft is useless. The whole vessel heaves helplessly on the rolling tide. The masts are out, and the driving power is absent! What steam is it that floating mass of complicated mechanism, giving it life, movement, direction, purpose—that spiri-

tual strength is to our mental and physical organism. To be equipped with the richest measure of spiritual strength and beauty, the soul must receive the fullness of the indwelling Deity—God in our imagination, God in our motives, God in our meditations, God in our activities, God filling up our entire manhood.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

You will find it to be very interesting and profitable to make use of the foregoing exposition in unfolding the topic. Select two persons to read the section, one to read the section, "A divine model—the Father;" and the other to read, "Noble characters—the Children." Then select three more persons to read the section, "How Prepared." Number one taking paragraph 1; number two, paragraph 2; and number three, paragraph 3. The President can come prepared to make appropriate observations after each one has read. This, with appropriate Scripture, song, discussion, and appeal, will make a very helpful meeting.

SEPTEMBER 28.—MISSIONS; MISSIONARY HEROES. "CHEERFUL AND ADVERSITY."

Acts 27, 22-30.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Sept. 22. The face of an angel Acts 6, 9-15
Tues., Sept. 23. Asleep in prison Acts 12, 1-17
Wed., Sept. 24. Worship and stones Acts 14, 15-20
Thurs., Sept. 25. Sores in prison Acts 16, 25-34
Fri., Sept. 26. "Be not afraid" Acts 18, 11-14
Sat., Sept. 27. "Be of good cheer" Acts 28, 1-11

A day or two ago I heard a lady from Palestine say that the Oriental shepherd is a hero. A hero, because he despises ease, endures hardships, braves dangers, and risks his life for the sheep. A missionary of the cross is a hero for similar reasons. He listens not to the call of unworthy indifference; he shoulders heavy burdens; he exhibits splendid courage; he places his life on the altar; and all that he might win some, and add to the joy of earth and heaven. There are certain characteristics of missionary heroes, in common with other true heroes, which are worthy of attention.

I. READINESS.

"Be instant in season, out of season," writes the apostle. This is in line with Paul's whole ministry. He is the prepared soldier, waiting for his captain's orders. From the time of his conversion, when he is reported to have said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" until he writes his final letter, his attitude is one of constant readiness. And he was ready, not only because he believed in Jesus Christ, but because he was utterly consecrated to the will of Christ. He had no will of his own. He was ready to go into Arabia, where he spent the better part of three years, thinking about that Gospel which he should preach. He was ready to leave Arabia, when God ordered him. He was ready to go back to his old home in Tarsus, and waited several years, though we may suppose that he was eager enough to get into the thick of the fight. He was ready, when the call came, to go amongst the heathen of the wilds of Arabia. He was ready to endure afflictions of all kinds. He was ready to go to prison and then to Rome, and finally, at the end of his long life, he writes, "I am now ready to be offered up."

II. FAITHFULNESS.

Paul's exhortation to Timothy to be instant in season, out of season, implies not only readiness, but faithfulness. Further along he exhorts him to endure affliction. He writes in a brief word regarding himself: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Was there ever a more faithful servant of God than the apostle