

THE CALL TO MISSIONARY WORK.

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I am to give, as far as the time admits, an answer to the question, "How may a man know that he is called to the mission field?" Many men are considering the foreign mission work, and what I say will particularly apply to that work, though the principles are the same in every department of the work of the ministry.

THINGS TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

First of all, we must lay down certain assumptions or things taken for granted as the basis of all that is said. There are four of these assumptions.

1. We assume that the field is the world. This is Christ's own word regarding the matter. We cannot limit the preaching of the Gospel to any one spot in the inhabited part of the world. The whole world is the field.

2. The second assumption is that God loves all parts of the world equally. I do not, of course, mean that the Christianized portion of it does not please Him more than the un-Christian part. But it is unquestionably true that the whole earth is dear to the heart of Christ. If we may so put it, the world rotates on its axis inside the heart of Jesus. There is no foreign field to Him.

3. The third assumption is that God wants the world evangelized as quickly as possible. He does not want the work done in a slighted manner, nor does He want us to enter upon the work prematurely from the point of view of our own preparation for it. He wants well-trained men to do this work. But making allowance for all this, certainly we may assume that He wants the world evangelized fully at the earliest possible moment.

4. The fourth assumption is that the preacher

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is under orders. He does not decide on his field of labor for himself. He holds himself in readiness to obey the mandate of Christ. It is vain to attempt to instruct a man on how to find a field of activity in the ministry unless his will is submissive to Christ's will. We must, therefore, assume at the outset that the preacher's mind is obedient to Christ.

We have, then, on one side God seeking to dispose the forces. He is the great strategist who looks abroad over the field. He appoints the workers to the various parts of the field. On the other side we have the preacher seeking to know God's will. Now this latter fact that the preacher is seeking to know God's will implies three things regarding the preacher.

1. First, it implies that the preacher faces the whole question. He does not exclude any part of the field from his view as a possible field for him. He does not exclude from his thought China, or Japan, or Africa, or Brazil, or India, or any other part of the mission field. His mind is open to those regions as wide as it is to the regions at home.

2. The second thing that is implied is that he is actively concerned to know God's will. He is not merely waiting to be shoved into the work. Conscripts are not wanted. He seeks to find out God's will for him. His mind is in a state of activity. He is not waiting for some extraordinary manifestation, but he appreciates the importance of the question, and is earnestly seeking to ascertain the mind of the Spirit.

3. It is also implied that he is genuinely willing and ready to obey orders to go anywhere. Sometimes the struggle is over this point. rather than the question of actually going to a foreign field. Some men are disobedient in spirit, and when they face the world field shrink from a complete surrender to go any where. When they make the complete surrender they often find that God's will for them is to remain at home. It is of supreme importance that there be in the

preacher's heart and life no unwillingness, but that he be entirely ready at any time to do all of God's will.

HOW GOD'S WILL IS MADE KNOWN.

We come, then, to the question, "How is God's will made known?" and the answer is as follows:

1. Through the man's faith, plus his fitness, plus his common sense. Fitness for the work, of course, enters into the question of a man's duty—physical fitness, mental fitness, and spiritual fitness. Many men imagine that they are unfit, however, when they are not. Reasonably good health, good common sense, tact in dealing with other people, perseverance and patience—these are qualities which enter into fitness for the work. Spiritual fitness, of course, we must take for granted—that a man loves the Master and loves souls for whom He died. In short, the every-day qualities which make a man successful at home are the qualities which enable him to do successful missionary work. The mission field needs the best men, just as the home field needs the best men, and the qualifications for one are, in most respects, the same as for the other.

2. God's will is also made known, in the second place, through the relative needs of the various parts of the field and the distribution of forces. It is natural to suppose that God wants men where men are scarce. He wants workers where the harvest is white and the laborers are few. He wants the rescuing party to give attention to the point where the wreck is taking place. There are other things to be taken into account, of course, besides the distribution of forces, but surely this is one of the important factors in a man's consideration of this subject.

3. God shows us also through the Providential guidance of outward events and the opinions of the brethren. Sometimes events occur in our lives which hinder our going to the foreign field, which practically make it imperative that we stay at home. In other

instances God opens the door to us and shows us clearly by events that this is His will. The wise man will usually consult wise brethren on this subject of duty as to mission work. Frequently the opinion of others about us is better than our own opinion of ourselves. He is a wise man who knows how to consult wise men and who is wise enough to learn from the opinions of the wise.

4. In the early stages of inquiry upon this matter frequently all the preacher can do is to maintain an attitude of alert readiness to go wherever God calls. Many a student in the Seminary or young preacher elsewhere begins to struggle with this question at an early period in his life as a minister and does not reach a decision until his Seminary course is finished. Where the way is not perfectly clear it is better for him to bide his time patiently, but he should maintain an attitude of prayer, inquiry, of active desire to know God's will. Along with this he should maintain an alert and ready attitude, ready to follow where God leads, quick to respond. Frequently this is as far as one can go at first. You may be compelled to defer your final decision for a year or two, or even longer. This, however, is not necessary in all cases. Sometimes God makes the way perfectly clear at once, a man settles down into a fixed conviction, and has peace and joy in the Lord.

5. If the above attitude is maintained, in due time a conviction becomes fixed and definite, and duty becomes clear. A man may depend upon that if he is sincerely desirous of knowing the will of Christ and holds himself open to conviction, faces the whole question, the whole field, has no mental reservation, desires above all things to do that which will be for the glory of Christ and the salvation of the world. In due time the pathway will become perfectly clear. The chief points in one's attitude are sincerity of motive, the obedient spirit, and the desire to know God's will.