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WHOLE No. 78

Carleton, Victoria and Madawaska Quarterly Meeting.

The above meeting will be held with Centreville Baptist church, beginning on the evening of the second Friday of December (13th). As there will be important business we want a large number of delegates.

R. W. DEMMINGS, Sec'y-Treas.

Before Pentecost.

PENTECOST is more than a historical event: it is a personal, present-day experience. There is a "before" and an "after" Pentecost in the Christian life. And not simply one isolated and transcendent experience either, but a repeated experience. It is in this way we are thinking of Pentecost. It means to us the coming of a new power into our life, the vitalizing and thrilling of our souls with new visions of truth, new impulses towards righteousness and love—new hopes and inspirations. When these come to us the day of Pentecost has fully come. Though the descent of the Spirit seemed to be sudden in the upper room, though there was instantaneousness in the rush of wind and appearing of the tongues of fire, there had been a gradual approach towards the great experience on the part of the disciples and their companions in prayer. The first crash of war comes in a moment, the touch of fire to hurl the deadly missiles in less time than the twinkling of an eye, but days and months—even years—had been leading up to and preparing for that moment of crisis. Pentecost is a culmination for which there had been preparation. No one leaps into the abundant life without first passing through a process of preparation.

The door leading into this larger life was a door of sorrow and weakness. The death and going away of the Lord was a grief and a mystery to them. Their new charges and responsibilities pressed heavily, and they stood bewildered in faith and purpose. Thus they were led to much reflection and prayer, and their hearts were made ready for the new power and hope. Sorrow and anxiety are often gateways leading to the larger blessing. A thousand times has the Church found that grief and dismay have heralded the dawn of a better day, for humbling and self-emptying go before the new possession of the Spirit of God.

Then they followed the word of Jesus with much simplicity and exactness. They went back from Olivet to Jerusalem and stayed just as he told them. It meant a great deal to do this. Their homes and families were in the north country: their business was making demands on them; their store of provision was running low, but they tarried in spite of these things. The Master's word was sacred to them. We raise a hundred questions as to how we may gain the Spirit's power. We speculate and debate. We make it a greater mystery than it is. We forget the simple way which is accessible to us all. We forget to do just what our Lord has told us. Pentecost follows our obeying. An unquesting following of the teachings of Christ in our daily life will usher us into the full and blessed life of the Spirit.

They waited. It was the attitude of their hearts towards the great promise. They were not in a languid, indolent condition, but one of high tension. Desire was aflame. Expectation was reaching after it. They knew not how long they should need wait there, for no time was fixed. "Not many days." It was definite and yet indefinite. The promise was of the sort to keep hope and longing wakeful. In God's knowledge all is definite, but the side of the promise facing us is indefinite. "Not many days." The given time is not named. We only now it will not be long before the power will

come upon us. Impatience and unbelief may ask, "Why tarriest thou so long, O Lord," but he is very near at that very moment.

Harmony of desires and prayers go before the church's Pentecost. More than one, it is said, they were together "with one accord." After the death of Jesus there was a disposition to scatter. Within a few hours of his death we read of two disciples going home from Jerusalem with hope dead in their hearts. Peter proposed going back to his work on the Sea of Galilee. The tie was broken which held them together. But now a new spirit came into their hearts. Their souls blended in faith and hope. No rivalry or discord now; they were in beautiful spiritual accord. Before their lives were like separate streams. Now they flowed together as in one river. It is most significant how this unity sprang up. It was that sort of spontaneity with which members of a church draw together in spirit and desire before the coming of revival. Oneness of heart is the product of the heavenly life. The disciples had much of the Holy Spirit among them before the great denunciation on the day of Pentecost. They were in the Spirit while waiting and praying with one accord, and the Spirit in them. The presence of the Spirit in a church is always attested by the blending sympathies and longing of the members and their coming together in one place. People do not become united in spirit through exhortation or rebuke. It is beyond our power to bring discordant natures into accord, and unite those who are separated by divergent opinions and plans, but in those days, before the Church's Pentecost, this spontaneous accord springs up in a way we scarce can tell, and it is the certain harbinger of a great blessing. It is well that we study prayerfully the life and thought of the early disciples immediately before the first great Pentecost.

Purpose.

Many years ago, at Rockport, Mass., there was a terrific storm sweeping across that coast, and in the darkness of the night a vessel sent up signals of distress. Through the storm the hundreds of spectators who speedily assembled could make out a vessel rapidly and helplessly drifting toward the cruel rocks. There was no help and no hope for any one on board, so all said, and so it almost proved. There was absolutely nothing that could be done. It would all be over with the ill fated vessel within a few moments. Soon there came a wave more angry than before, it hurled the helpless craft against the rocks, but still far away from any possibility of help. Helpless figures were seen leaping into the waves, a few cries for help arose feebly above the roaring of the storm, the vessel disappeared beneath the turbulent waves, and then all was over. And yet not all. As one fierce wave broke over the helpless wreck, chasing the spectators farther upon the shore, a helpless bundle of something was left by the retreating water high and dry upon the shore. It proved to be the twelve-year old son of the captain, and he alone of all the crew was given up by the fierce storm. He was in nowise injured, and kind hands gladly cared for him and sent him on to his friends. What became of this lad no one who witnessed this thrilling scene now knows.

Did this miraculous rescue from a terrible death make him grow up impressed with the idea that his life had been spared for a purpose? Did he feel that God had spared his life for a noble work, and did he set himself bravely and resolutely to the task of accomplishing that work? Let us trust that he did. And yet was there more in his life to lead him to spend it nobly than there is in the life of every one of us?

How many of us can recall many places in life where we have been spared by what seems to have been some fortunate chance? How many dangers have we passed through of which we were unconscious, but of which God knew?

How many have been suddenly overtaken by accident or disease and cut off, but we have been spared? What for? What is God's purpose in this? What purpose have we because of this? Has any one who has ever lived any more reason, after all, to live brave, true, strong, noble and helpful lives than we? And what can make life so worthy to be lived as some high purpose shining before us like a guiding star, entering our lives like a good spirit, and shaping, leading, ennobling all our career? And what in this world so sad, so pitiable, so utterly forlorn as a human soul drifting with no aim in life?

God has spared our lives because he needs them. He has a place for us. His design includes us at our best, and all life, and all character, and all humanity becomes marred and imperfect in just the measure that we fail to fit ourselves into the niche which he provides.

Knowing Jesus.

Every moment applied to studying Jesus is well spent. We live in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in an age when the Holy Spirit has certain effective truths to apply which he did not have before Jesus lived and taught and died and rose again. If we fail to know of this truth we have deprived the Holy Spirit of his effective means of working and our lack of knowledge places him in the condition in which Jesus was put by the Nazarenes through their lack of faith.

The world's best master-builder is handicapped and can build nothing but huts if he is limited in material to a few paltry boards and bricks, but with unlimited material at his command he can erect the world palaces. The Christian who learns of Jesus furnishes his mind with the truth, the material that the Holy Spirit uses for the building of character.

Jesus has gone to prepare a place for me and He has sent the Holy Spirit to prepare me for that place. But the Holy Spirit can do nothing for me while Jesus is shut out from my mind and he can do little for me, while I know but little of Jesus. The truth of Jesus furnishes the fulcrum for the lever with which the power of the Holy Spirit is moving the world from its present course and sending it heavenward.

C. C. C.

One of the most influential Roman Catholic papers in Europe—the 'Chretien Francais,' published in Paris, laments the condition of the Roman Church, both in France and elsewhere. Of Spain it says that Protestantism was never in such a flourishing condition there as now. In cities where twenty years ago it would have been unsafe for a citizen to avow his dissent from Rome, there are now Protestant places of worship well kept and regularly attended. The most populous and prosperous of the Provinces of Spain, Barcelona, is the one in which Protestantism is making the most progress. A writer in the same paper—a priest who had been in that country—tells of the decline of Romanism in the United States. By immigration and natural increase they ought, he says, to number over twenty millions, but there are, he declares, not more than three or four millions "practicing their creed." Catholicism, he says, is dying of the freedom of American institutions. This is strong testimony from one who deprecates the facts he states.

We often do more good by our sympathy than our labors.—Canon Farrer.

Bethink thee, while the tears do run,
No cloud would rise but for the sun.

—Gerald Massey.

Tears are the softening showers which cause the seed of heaven to spring up in the human heart.—Sir Walter Scott.