

## Messenger and Visitor

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### Vitalizing the Prayer-Meeting.

The prosperity of a church depends more upon the character of its prayer-meetings than upon any other one thing. If they are what they ought to be, —attractive, spiritual, instructive, the church will grow and thrive; if they are dull and lifeless, the church will languish, no matter what its external condition may be. It is therefore a matter of no small moment that everything shall be done to put all possible vitality into the prayer-meeting so as to make it a source of inspiration and blessing to every member of the flock.

In a good church prayer-meeting, there are two prime essentials: —first, the edification of the whole body; second, the cultivation of the gifts of individual members. The pastor's great problem is how to secure the latter without hindering the former. As a rule he is better qualified both by education and experience to 'speak to edification' than most lay members.

But it is essential to the fullest development of the spiritual life of the church that every gift the members possess should be brought into active exercise. All experienced pastors will agree, that in this way only, can the church be kept from falling into an idle and inefficient state.

A silent church is not apt to be an active, growing church, for, though it may be true that 'silence is golden' at times and under certain circumstances, the fact remains and always will remain, that the spoken word of Christian experience is one of the most effective means of promoting spiritual growth.

The readers of this journal do not need to be reminded that the prayer-meeting as ordinarily conducted, is not admirably adapted to accomplish the two objects named. The common mode of conducting a prayer-meeting is as crude as possible. The pastor opens the meeting with a form as rigid in outline as a prayer-book ritual, and after the customary round of hymns, Scripture reading, prayer and "talk," drops the reins, and lets the meeting take care of itself, with, perhaps, an occasional jog at the elbows of laggard brethren by way of reminders, "to impove the time." The common result of this go-as-you-please method is very familiar to us all. The hour drags heavily, with long and painful pauses, or there is a dreary round of commonplace remarks and stereotyped prayers that afford neither pleasure nor profit to any one. In this service those who speak have made no real progress in the cultivation of "the gift that is in them," and the listeners have heard nothing that will help them to a higher religious life. Such a mode of conducting a prayer-meeting does not seem to be very well suited to secure either of the objects referred to. There surely is "a more excellent way."

The idea which must underlie any plan for making the prayer-meeting what it ought to be may be summed up in one word—*preparation*. The pastor prepares himself to speak; the lay brethren should do the same. It is a rare power to be able to speak well without special preparation, and the reason why the prayer-meeting is so often given over to the prosy talk of a few "old stagers" is that the rest, having made no preparation to speak, do not dare to try. It is the pastor's duty as overseer of the flock, to look to it that brethren who have a gift for profitable speaking or for leading in prayer, do not neglect it. He should not only exhort them to exercise these gifts, but aid them in doing so. This he may do in various ways. Suppose, for example, he should select a topic for consideration a week in advance, and in place of a general exhorta-

tion to all to come prepared to say something about it—an exhortation rarely heeded—should assign a single point to one and another, in whom he has discerned latent ability to speak profitably, give them some hints about preparation, and then, before the meeting opens, slip a memorandum of the order in which they are to speak into the hand of each. Let him ask a number of brethren to come prepared to lead in prayer with special reference to the topic of the evening. Then, if he chooses, let him "throw the meeting open," taking care to be suggestively brief in his own remarks—unless, indeed, as may sometimes be wise, he reserves these till the close. In this way while none will be hindered from speaking "if the Spirit moves," the time will be largely filled up with at least thoughtful speaking and prayer, and so far, there will be a gain in attractiveness and edifying power; and the process of training in the exercise of "gifts" will be happily begun. This is but a hint of the many ways in which a pastor who carefully studies the characteristics of his people, and the specific deficiencies of his own prayer-meeting, can draw on the latent powers of the one, and give new interest and power to the other.

We should be glad to publish a few helpful hints from pastors of experience along this line, such as could be written on a sheet of note paper or on a post card.

### Being Real.

Sometime ago a gentleman met a friend on a railroad train and after the customary greeting he said, 'Brother—I've got a new prayer,—got a new prayer!' He knew his friend's earnest piety, and was not startled by the strangeness of the expression. 'Well, teach me your new prayer,' was the reply. 'It is this—*'Lord Make Me Real.'* Here is something worth thinking about,—a prayer that would not hurt any one of us to learn. A good prayer for our New Brunswick readers to learn in these election times.

We believe God's word,—that sin and pardon, heaven and hell, are facts. But is our manner such as will impress others that these things are facts to us? Are we 'real' about them? When Paul and Silas in the course of their journeying had come to Thessalonica, the unbelieving Jews stirred up a tumult against them, and began their accusation before the rulers with the words, 'These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also,' and the charge was true. It was not alone the simple story of the cross, ('power of God', though it was) that had brought about this result, there was something more, something in the way in which the story was told, something in the manner of the man who told it. Paul was real. See him in Caesarea a few years later, preaching to a royal audience. Permitted to speak for himself, he boldly and earnestly speaks for his Master, and so earnestly that even King Agrippa was 'almost persuaded,' and Festus charged him with being 'mad.' If this were madness, it would be a good thing if all our churches, B. Y. P. Us', and Sunday-schools were asylums filled with men and women afflicted with this Pauline lunacy, 'determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'

But a greater than Paul is here; we have the example of the Lord Himself, about whom the disciples remembered that it was written 'the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.' His meat was to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work. Our work is identical with His; we are laborers together with Him, we are made partakers of His sufferings, and shall be of His glory.

The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost; and it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. We can find no work that will more glorify the Father than that in which His well-beloved spirit has life and we can do no better than follow his steps in the earnestness and singleness of purpose, with which He went about it. He was 'real.'

Are our lives through the week in harmony with the truths we read, or hear, or teach, on Sunday? Or is our religion on Sunday, like the clothes we wear, different in form or expression from what it is on Monday?

Do we speak of 'waiting on the Lord' one day in seven and give the whole business the lie on the

remaining six? Whatever else may or may not be true, let no taint of insincerity be found in us '*Lord make me real.*'

### Editorial Notes.

—Growth, effectiveness, power, influence and boldness in the divine life are qualities to be "worked out." They are the results of effort and consecration. This work may be more laborious to some than to others, as is toil of any kind, but to no one will these virtues come by chance. "Something for nothing" is a principle that finds no place in God's economy. Heaven's glory is not free, even though salvation "is all of grace." No one enters it by good luck, it is not a "present" to favorites, nor a windfall to a dying man, but "blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life."

—There are some truths which need to be emphasized. One of them is the incalculable value of the soul, another is the fact of sin, degrading and damning this being, whom God has marked so high—the awful, blighting, blasting, destroying power of sin; another is the final doom of the impenitent. Tone it down, twist and turn as you please, the everlasting punishment of the wicked is as clearly taught in the Scriptures as the fact that God is love; a fourth fact is the power of the Gospel of Christ. Now, and evermore, it is "the power of God unto Salvation" to every one that believes." These great virtues need iteration and reiteration.

—'Come out and be separate' is Christ's clear command to every one who enlists under His banner. The Bible draws distinct lines, and no one can stand on both sides of the dividing line. On one side walks the Master, on the other drifts the worldling, and Christians need never expect to draw their fashion-loving, unconverted neighbors over to Christ's side of the line by compromises. If you go a mile with worldlings you will very likely be compelled to go two or three instead. Moses wanted Hobab's company but he said, "Come with us and we will do thee good." That is the only way to win souls to Jesus.

—Says a recent writer: "If you will study the history of Christ's ministry from baptism to ascension, you will discover that it is made up mostly of little words, little deeds, little prayers, little sympathies, adding themselves in unwearied succession. The talk with the woman at the well, the tear at the grave of Lazarus, the teaching a mob of followers how to pray, the explanation of the Gospel one Sunday afternoon to two disciples, are simple illustrations of our Lord Jesus Christ's methods." It is not the great things done by the few as the infinite number of little things done by the many that go to make the warp and woof of our lives on this earth.

—We learn from the Treasurer of Denominational Funds for N. B. that there are quite a number of churches that have not contributed to the work of the denomination thus far, and one half of the year is gone. The total contributions to February 1st were \$1,323.75 for all purposes. This is not as much as was contributed to the same date last year, though it is right to say that two of the largest contributing churches the past year have not done as well this year. There are others that are falling into line. The desire is to have an offering from every church at least once in three months. It is only when all take hold, pastors and people, that this branch of our work will thrive. Our columns are filled from week to week with the most encouraging news from home and abroad. Lend a hand, brethren. Let us all help!

—The address of the late president of the N. S. Fruit Growers' Association, a resume of which appears on page 10 of this issue, is well worthy of perusal by the readers of this journal. This association has done and is doing a most valuable work in connection with fruit culture in Nova Scotia. We could wish that the sphere of its work might be so enlarged as to embrace all the Maritime Provinces. We are assured that fruit can be raised with profit in both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, the quality of which will compare favorably with that grown in any other part of Canada. Perhaps we cannot expect a N. B. Fruit Growers' Association but surely something might be done in the direction indicated. Mr. Pigelow as President of the N. S. Association and those associated with him have been indefatigable in their efforts to promote the culture of fruit. Work done along this line should be encouraged by all who desire the material prosperity of the country in which they reside. A School of Agriculture and Horticulture for those three Provinces would be a step in the right direction. It is worthy of the consideration of our governments. We are pleased to learn that something has been done in this direction.

### Wolfville Notes.

On Lord's Day, Feb. 8th, the Day of Prayer for Colleges was duly observed. At the morning service in the church, Rev. C. H. Day, M. A. of Kentville, preached a