

On the Sabbath following my ordination, while preaching in the morning service from the words: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth, the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes" (Isaiah 54:2), I noticed that the presence of God was most manifest in the congregation. At first I did not quite understand it. The people were weeping as if they had all lost loved ones. I had not been telling pathetic stories but was giving an expository sermon, showing how God is seeking to enlarge our lives, and the beauty, power and blessing of such lives in whom God has absolute control. During the last ten minutes of the sermon, I noticed that the people could hardly look at the speaker through the tears which filled their eyes, and I felt some embarrassment as I continued with my message. In all my ministry I had never witnessed such a scene.

Immediately, on closing my sermon, I was constrained to do something I had never seen done by any preacher, and which I had never imagined I should do in a quiet Sabbath morning service I felt impressed to extend an invitation to confess Christ as Saviour and Lord. This I did, and, to my surprise, nine adult men and women, all in the prime of life, arose and walked rapidly to the front of the Church. There was no urging. This response was as spontaneous as a spring freshet. I said that I was surprised because I had not expected any manifestation like this, especially in a Sunday morning service.

The truth is that while I was heart and soul in my work, nevertheless, I did not look for a mighty revival such as we were now beginning to witness. My ambition was to do a good* solid, upbuilding work, to keep the Church free from debt, united, and to take in enough members to make up for losses by death and removals. I had never conducted a great revival of religion, if I may use the term, though I believed that God had called me to do the work of an evangelist.

After I had given some instruction to those friends who were seeking salvation from sin and was about to announce the benediction, suddenly a deacon, a man over eighty years of age arose and said :

"Do not dismiss us. I want to speak."

"Very well, brother, we shall be glad to hear you."

The deacon continued: "We must hold special

meetings, for the time of a great visitation is at hand. You know, pastor, we are in a revival of religion now and we must keep the doors of the Church open, for the Lord is visiting His people. I lost my wife some months ago and I felt lonely out on the farm, and so I sought the face of God. I have been praying three months for a revival. Some nights I would wake from sleep, get out and kneel down by the side of my bed and pray, how long I do not know. But, finally, God assured me that my prayers would be answered, and the first Sabbath you preached here I knew He was going to bring the blessing to us through your ministry, and now He is pouring out His Spirit and we cannot close this Church."

I replied : "Deacon, I have no barrel of sermons to turn over. It is all I can do to prepare two messages weekly and a prayer meeting address and visit my new congregation, so you must excuse me."

"No, Sir, we cannot excuse you. We want you to preach every night. You can do it, and if you cannot then this Church will do the preaching. I will do my share if necessary. I move you, Sir, that the Church begin tomorrow night to hold special services."

The motion was seconded and carried heartily and I announced that I would do my best. The action of the Church and the souls who were converted that hour revealed that God was answering the prayers of that consecrated deacon.

A large congregation was present that Sabbath night, when twenty-five persons accepted Christ, and so it was every night for two weeks, many were confessing Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

All the neighboring churches received accessions. A small Methodist Church about one mile away, on a quiet road, received thirty-eight most promising young men and women. The Presbyterian Church, less than a mile distant on another country road, welcomed new members. Our own Church received fifty adult people into membership on confession of faith.

But that was not all. The movement spread over a large part of Putnam County, and in the Baptist Churches alone I was kept busy for one year preaching on week nights between the Sabbaths, which I spent with my own Church.

Like all true spiritual awakenings, the services were characterized by strong conviction of sin. I shall never forget the confession made by one of

the older members. He was a man universally respected. This brother bought milk from the farmers and sold it in New York. This is his story, as he told it before a large congregation.

He said: "For twenty odd years I have been watering the milk. There is no way I can make restitution for I do not know the people in the city who used the milk. I confess my sin before the Church and the entire community. I am a great sinner, and yet I am a trustee of this Church. You may have been thinking of me as a saint, but I have had no testimony, no peace during all these years. Pray for me."

On the following day this man came to the parsonage with a face that beamed with a light that was not of this world. I had been absent, and on my arrival home found him sitting on the steps waiting for me. We went inside and sat down. "Now, brother, tell me your story," I said. He was laughing and could hardly utter a word because of the joy that filled his life ; Several times he started to speak but hesitated, for his mouth was filled with laughter.

I had most serious concern for him, fearing that he was losing his reason. I had heard of folks who had gone crazy over religion, or better for the want of true religion, and this man seemed to be mentally upset. He said he could not work, that he had spent the day telling his neighbors what had occurred in his life.

I said to him: "Brother, you know when a man gets real religion it makes him want to work. This is a busy season with you farmers. My old Sunday-School teacher used to tell his class that a lazy man cannot be a Christian."

'Then this noble brother replied in quiet, rational tones : " 'I am not beside myself, most noble Felix, but speak the words of truth and soberness/ when I tell you that I was born of God last night."

I now saw that he was gloriously sane, so I said to him, "Go on and tell your experience."

He continued : "When I confessed my sin before the Church the great work of grace began. My wife and I, who live alone, sat up before the kitchen

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stove all night, reading the Bible, singing the old hymns, praying, and this morning peace came into

my life. Jesus became as real as if He were standing by my side, and I love Him with a holy love. As is my custom, I went out in the morning to help Jack, our hired man, milk the cows, but before finishing the first cow I arose and said : Jack I cannot work today, for I am too happy to work. I must go to my neighbors. They are all up now. I must tell them what the Lord has done for me. So I started down the country road to call on a neighbor with whom I had not spoken in many years. I met him driving his horse and wagon to the village, and I told him the good news and asked him to forgive me for anything I had said about him, and he did. Then I called on the deacons of our Church, walking all day over the country roads, and now, before going home, I came to tell you."

This good man concluded his story with these words : "O how I love the Lamb of God." And he repeated : "O how I love that Lamb."

I could relate other marvelous experiences which men and women had during this glorious work of grace. This brother remained a shining light in that Church until he was called up higher.

The deacons said that what impressed them most about this work of grace was, that a great, deep calm pervaded the services. And what is more, it did not pass away, but continued in that Church for one year until I closed my pastorate there. At every service, morning and night, the revival spirit was with us in power. Not one Sabbath passed without one or more confessing Christ and uniting with the Church. Some of these came long distances, as far as ten, fifteen miles, to spend the Lord's Day with us, in some cases whole families, strangers whom we did not know.

The only purpose in recording here this heaven-sent revival is to show the reward that comes from waiting upon the Lord regarding our fields of labor. What fearful sorrow and failure have come upon churches and pastors because they trust in their own wisdom in this supernatural work. What suicidal folly for heaven's ambassadors to run before they are commissioned. There is "one like unto the Son of Man" who is in the midst of the churches, and who is waiting to lead to victory. It is infinitely better not to preach at all than to be floundering around, powerless, outside the will of God. O the appalling tragedy which ever results from the union of a self-seeking preacher and a carnal church. Away to your knees O ministers and churches of Jesus and await your orders from the throne. "Your Father who seeth in secret will reward you openly."