

Messenger and Visitor

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Growth in Grace.

One of the world's prime needs is a stalwart Christianity. That the Kingdoms of this world have not become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, as promised, is not because there are not enough Christians in the world to conquer it, but because there is not enough of the right kind. As one has faithfully said 'Not more Christians but a better brand'—is the great need. That a large number of Christians are as efficient and active when first born into the Kingdom, as they ever become seems to be lamentably true. But this is not the divine purpose. They are dwarfs, but not of God's making, nor according to His will. He has enjoined growth, but they have not grown. He has provided liberal means for that growth, but they have not been used. And as a result there is dwarfage, inefficiency and unhappiness. The darkness in the world remains still deep and dense, and the perishing souls they were sent to save remain unsaved, as far as they are concerned. Now why is this? One reason may be because there are so many Christians who fail to hear God's command to 'grow in grace' and do not rightly apprehend the conditions upon which growth depends. The maturity of all life depends upon growth, and all growth depends upon conditions suited to produce it. In the animal Kingdom these conditions are food, air and exercise.

A neglect of all or any of these conditions stunts growth, and tends to dwarfage. This is not less true in the spiritual Kingdom. Food, air, and exercise are conditions precedent to healthy spiritual growth, and the neglect of any or all of them hurtful or fatal to a well rounded Christian character. When, therefore, God enjoins spiritual growth, He has graciously and abundantly supplied the means, by which such growth can be successful. Let us examine them a little more closely:—

(1). Food. Peter says 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby'; and the Corinthian Christians are told by Paul that while they ought to have grown beyond the milk stage, and been able to bear strong meat, they have not done so, and have still to be fed as babes. The Word of God has milk for babes and food for every stage of growth, up to the strong meat suitable to grown up men and women in Christ Jesus. But the abundance of this food will make no Christian grow, except as he diligently and faithfully uses it. And, even, in using it, it is to be remembered that not the amount used, but the amount assimilated, is the measure of growth. To 'grow in grace' therefore Christians, should not only study God's word earnestly, but, by faith and prayer, strive to bring their lives in conformity to it, and so day by day reproduce its precious truths, in holy character—struggle for greater Christlikeness, and for a more perfect moulding into the image of their Great Exemplar. This will give growth, efficiency and happiness.

(2). As air is essential to the life and growth of the animal so the Holy Spirit is essential to spiritual life and development. He is the vital breath of the soul. This vital breath God has promised to give to them that ask Him. He is promised as our Comforter, our Guide into all truth, and our Leader along the heavenly road. His presence in the soul gives the light of truth, and warmth of love, essential to growth. His absence gives chill and blight. Those who would grow in grace should earnestly seek His presence, and be careful not to grieve Him by sin.

(3). Exercise. The Lord expects no Christian to be idle. He has therefore created them in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he has before ordained that they should walk with Him. What healthy exercise is to the body, walking in other good works is to the soul. Each is essential in its sphere to healthy life and growth. Each develops strength and vigor, and increases manly power and efficiency. And how abundantly has God provided for this element of 'growth in grace'! Here is a world to be saved, and the means of saving it is committed, not to angels, but to Christians. All the divine resources are at their command for this purpose. Their very weakness is strength, by the accompanying presence of Him, in whose hands is 'all power in heaven and in earth.' What an unlimited field for Christian work! What grand encouragement for undertaking it!

Whatever else Christians may be or do, to neglect this work is to dwarf their natures and stunt their growth. The work of saving lost men is God's great gymnasium for the development of a stalwart Christianity. This is the focal point to which God would converge all the forces of His people, and to this end He urges their 'growth in grace.' Their spiritual growth and comfort depend on their obedience to this high behest. Only by so doing can the highest and best results be obtained by the individual and the church. It is worth the effort.

A Model Prayer-Meeting.

Last Sunday closed a Week of Prayer for Young Men. The results are only known to Him who taught us to pray 'Our Father who art in heaven.' The service just ended suggests 'a model prayer-meeting.' Where can such a meeting be found? In that upper-room at Jerusalem, where the first prayer-meeting of the early church was held. This meeting had some features that we do well to note, all of which are essential to a model prayer-meeting. First, as to attendance. It was well attended. There were 120 persons present. This would make a good number for even many of our larger churches to-day. But interest is intensified, when it is learned—which is more to the purpose, than mere numbers—that they were all there. 'They were all with one accord in one place.' They were not as is too often the case now, with one accord in different places. All the church was present. A prayer-meeting may be largely attended even to-day, but you cannot say of it that they are all there. It is usually a small minority of the entire membership that is present. In this model prayer-meeting they were all there.

The brethren were there. Of course they were if all were present. But there is need to emphasize this. The brethren often have so much to do now-a-days—business engagements, a store, or farm to look after—that they cannot or do not attend. It is not a matter of little consequence, therefore to be reminded that a prime feature of this model prayer-meeting was—the presence of the brethren. And the sisters too, were there, though that might well go without the saying. A prayer-meeting without sisters! Who ever heard of the like? Such a thing may be, but seldom is. A prayer-meeting and sisters present is as self-evident as an axiom. The two are associated in every pastor's mind. Yes, all both brothers and sisters were present at this meeting. Then, look at the spirit of the meeting. They were of one accord. Beautiful accord! sweet unanimity! They were there as one man. Purpose, desire, affections—one. They were there to pray. And their accord in praying was not less than their accord in meeting; and 'they continued in prayer.' It was doubtless mainly a prayer-meeting, though they probably 'spoke often one to another.' And 'they continued steadfastly in prayer.' They not only took hold of God, but they held on to God. They asked, nothing wavering. Their desires must have been intense, and very specific. Nor is it difficult, in the light of events which followed, to conjecture the burden of their requests. And the sisters prayed. Read it: 'These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus.' The sisters prayed. None of them were satisfied with simply giving their testimony. How is it in these days! Then look at the results. The wonderful day of Pentecost and 3000 converted. The connection between the 3000 converts and the

prayer-meeting of 120, are closely related. How closely, cannot be positively affirmed by man. That there is a real, palpable link between the two,—no physical connection to be sure, but a moral and spiritual connection seems almost certain. Why was the record given, and in such detail, if such were not the case? In the record of that prayer-meeting with the 120 present, there is the human side of the key which unlocks the mysteries of the 3000 conversions.

It was a model prayer-meeting—a wonderful prayer-meeting, and wonderful in its results. Would that our pastors one and all might be the leaders in many such prayer-meetings for the months to come! Surely the needs are great, the demands urgent, and the promises 'yea and amen in Christ Jesus.'

Editorial Notes.

—Said a speaker at the Baptist Social Union of Boston on the 3rd inst: "The Watchman, the denominational journal, should be in every Baptist family. It is a mighty factor to denominational loyalty and growth." Put "MESSENGER AND VISITOR" in place of "Watchman" and then read it again. The pastor who works for his denominational paper is doing more to make his own pastoral work effective than he knows. It is not the question of editor or owners, it is that for which the paper stands and what are its aims and ideals.

—On page 2 of this issue will be found an interesting resumé of the Temperance Referendum in Ontario. It will repay perusal. It is longer than we care to print upon any question, but not as long as some sermons which are sent us for publication. The topic is a live one, at the present time, in the Upper Provinces and it may be still more lively in these Provinces by the sea according to some published reports. If the liquor men desire the repeal of existing temperance legislation in these Provinces, it is their privilege to make the effort. Perhaps they may succeed, but we do not believe such a thing possible. We are glad to know that the temperance sentiment is strong, but none too strong, in view of the appalling misery and wretchedness caused by the liquor traffic.

—From an address on "A trained church." Read it. "I never saw a trained church. I will die without seeing one. There is none. The bulk of the New Testament writings are for training disciples. They are very plain; were we as plain, we would be invited to go elsewhere. A Sunday School ought to be a Bible school, i. e., where the Bible is studied. There is a great big so-called Sunday School in New York in which for the life of you, you could not find a single Bible. Prayer meetings are a luxury now-a-days. There will be no churches in heaven. Churches do not go to heaven. Some members of churches may not meet their pastors in heaven. He will have gone to his own place. We talk about giving. It ciphers down to this, the supreme giving is the giving of one's self. Depend upon it the spiritual thermometer of the church corresponds to the thermometer of the pastor's heart."

—It is reported that at a joint meeting of the Committees appointed by the Methodist Conference in Winnipeg and the Presbyterian General Assembly to consider the question of co-operation in Home Mission work, especially in the West, the desirability for such co-operation was very generally expressed. The two Secretaries, Dr. Sutherland for the Methodists and Dr. McLaren for the Presbyterians, were instructed to communicate with the Home Mission superintendents and report at an adjourned meeting. We hail this movement on the part of the two leading Protestant denominations in Canada with pleasure. It is a step in the right direction. There is no doubt a very great saving in time and money will result from such co-operation. The overlapping in western lands must be very great, we see not a little of it among ourselves in the East. In view of the multitudes on the earth living in darkness there might well be a conservation of time and strength and money, so that these could be reached.

—The following questions will bear repetition. Cut them out and paste them in your bibles for ready reference. They are to the point, and suggestive:—Is there any mention of the baptism of believers in the New Testament? Yes, a number of cases. Is there any distinct account of the baptism of a babe in the New Testament? Not one. Is there a case by which it was evidently by immersion? Undoubtedly, there are a number. Is there a single case at which it was clearly by sprinkling? Not one. Will all the allusions to baptism suit believers immersion? Yes, every one. Is there one allusion which will suit infant sprinkling? No. Are there any clear commands given to believers to be themselves baptized? Yes. Are there any commands to bring unbelieving