

CAMP MEETINGS

The real camp meeting as a work of God has about disappeared from the country, except among the holiness churches. As you travel over the country there may be pointed out to you the places where powerful camp meetings were held from year to year, places that are now growing up with brush, or if used at all, the scene of a summer institute, Chautauqua or picnic ground. We have in the Church a number of great camp meetings, with good facilities and with good programs of evangelism, but a good history does not guarantee a useful future. Unless we know what the price is of spiritual power and continually pay it, we shall be forsaken of God and left to human resources just as really as others have been. We are here attempting to set down some things we believe to be the causes of disappointment and loss of power in the work of camp meetings.

1. Unworthy ambitions on the part of leaders. Sometimes this reveals itself in the form of compromising preaching intended to win the good will of the crowds, at the cost of God's standards of salvation. Sometimes it comes up in a vain ambition to make a display at the cost of that humble and heart-searching truth that alone will lead people to die out to sin and the world. Sometimes a lack of good judgment will lead such a body into a schedule of expenses for equipment or workers far beyond the ability of the people to pay on a reasonable basis in begging for money that the Spirit of God can do but little work. We have known of such meetings where the choicest period for preaching and soul-saving is taken up with long campaigns of extracting money, sometimes as much as an hour or more several times throughout the meeting.

2. A lack of a sense of responsibility. Camp meetings are different from a revival meeting in a local church, where the pastor and members know that if they do not take the work to heart no one else will. A group of preachers and Christian workers who dodge responsibility in the camp meeting can soon become such a dead weight as will make success impossible in any large measure. On the other hand, the camp where men and women are on hand to lift and labor heartily is well started on the road to make history that will look good in the records on high.

3. Lightness and frivolity. The evangelist who has a lively sense of humor must guard himself against the custom of punning and lightness in his preaching, the management, likewise, and the leader of song. We shall do well to think long and seriously on the work Jesus left to the church and the great cost of His part in redemption and then conduct our work in the light of the great eternity.

4. Lack of the spirit of prayer. Perhaps this should be mentioned first of all in considering the failings of camp meetings. Nothing can take the place of real intercession. The workers should be prayed for, but there is danger of getting into a rut of shallow and complimentary prayer for the various workers and officers, and thinking that in so doing the camp has really been well prayed through. Who knows the tremendous heart desires that must be awakened and poured out in earnest, persevering prayer? If as a people we follow the true ideals of prevailing prayer, we are pretty sure of carrying on for years to come

in these meetings with victory. We can recall attending one of the great meetings in the middle west where we believe the voice of prayer could be heard at any hour of the day and early night somewhere on the grounds.

5. The lack of faithful dealings with seekers. This is perhaps one of the most difficult and fundamental features of such a meeting. The people who come forward for prayer are often hurried through the process with such enthusiasm and haste that they are worse confused when it is all over than they were before. The camp meeting is there mainly for this one thing, to help people to hear from God, first in the awakening power of the Holy Spirit in the preaching, and second, by His unmistakable revelation to the soul in the witness of the Spirit. Since that is the work to be done, why spoil it by popping down and up before the soul has really settled up with God. We recall some years ago an incident in one of our camp meetings where the Rev. M. L. Haney was one of the evangelists. Early in the meeting and after prayer for a while at the altar he proposed to the leader that they would dismiss the whole meeting and send the people away for a night's rest. He explained to the leader that it would wear his workers out to continue long into the night, but the work proceeded on its usual course of allowing the seekers and their friends to hold on until they reached satisfactory victory or chose to go. After several days had passed Father Haney brought the matter up again in conversation and said he was pleased to observe that there were always enough workers on hand to carry every service through to victory. Ten days of waiting on God was not too much for the perseverance of the saints who had part in the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

6. A lack of a worthy vision of what should be done. Rev. George Ridout says on this subject: "I think what defeats many a camp is the absence of a resolve, cost what it may, to not let go till the power of God comes upon the meeting. I am persuaded that no matter how dead a camp may be (and there are many dried up and dead holiness camps in the land) that if the people of God will humble themselves; appoint a day of fasting and prayer, and resolve to pray through till the fire falls there will come a fiery baptism upon the meeting."

7. A failure on the part of the pastors and people supporting the camp to prepare the way for success. Every meeting has its price in the form of attendance, heart interest, loyal support, and intelligent cooperation. No meeting can take a deep hold on crowds that are constantly shifting. In these days of swift and independent travel, there is danger of trying to run our camp meetings with the people forever shifting, coming and going, looking in on the crowd and then rushing back home to do the chores. Camps that are well supported by the people should be the rallying place of praying groups who bring to the meeting friends and folks in general who are in need, and who will faithfully work in with the Spirit of the meeting to pray them through.

8. Making the camp a mere summer outing will surely result in it becoming just that. Even the matter of "feeding the saints" may be overdone. Rev. Hugh Price Hughes of the British Wesleyan Methodist Church is quoted as saying "Our chief business is not to coddle the saints but to collar the sinners."

God's blessings that overtake the diligent worker are the dearest of all.

The story of camp meetings in this country is bright with many great blessings of God. There are multitudes who have been saved and sanctified in these gatherings who probably would never have been reached in the small local church group. There are many young preachers who owe their best ideals of a successful ministry to the great sermons delivered with skill and under divine power in these gatherings.—Editorial by Rev. I. F. McLeister in Wesleyan Methodist.—Sel. by P. W.

GOD IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION

Rev. G. W. Ridout, D.D.

How important is this creation which we call the Universe! Richter says, "End is there none to the universe of God. All the stars echoed the question with amazement and this echo found no answer." Ulysses, of ancient times, had a great longing and immense ambition when he expressed his desire "to sail beyond the sunset and the baths of the Western stars." Locomotion is making our brains whirl with its present day achievements. The fast auto and the faster airplane are annihilating space! It has been estimated by Dr. Douglas, writing on "From Atoms to Stars," that a machine travelling around the world at the equator at the rate of 200 miles per hour would complete the journeys in five days. At the same speed of travel it would travel from the earth to the moon in fifty days; it would reach Neptune in 1,500 years, and in thirteen million years would reach from thence the neighboring star. It would take ninety thousand million years to have passed all the stars of the Milky Way and gotten back to the confines of our galaxy. Shakespeare exclaimed through one of his fairy characters: "I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes." Well, that virtually has happened! Indeed the Radio wave will encircle the earth in one-seventh of a second! David turns all these stars and planets to good account in his thinking when he cried out in Psalm 8: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained: What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man, that thou visitest him?" Genesis 1:27 answers: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."

"Thy goodness and thy truth to me
To every soul, abound!
A vast unfathomable sea,
Where all our thoughts are drowned."

Salt and Light! What a contrast! How different as emblems of faith. Jesus calls his disciples Salt! He next calls them Light. Matt. 5:13, 14. An eminent writer says: "Salt suggests the conservative; Light, the diffusive. The quality of salt is to preserve and conserve. The peculiar characteristic of Light is giving, spending, diffusing. The Church suffers sorely, not only from quantities of savourless salt, but also from bushel-covered lights, those who do all they can to hide it, afraid to show earnestness, even when they feel it most, repressing every impulse to let their lights shine before men."

What a thing is Light! They tell us that Light travels through space at 186,000 miles per second! Quicker than that does the Light of God strike a confessing, contrite soul who