

PHILADELPHIA.— —AMERICA.

March 2, 1831,

DEAR BRETHREN,

During the last months I have been so engaged in a multiplicity of things, that I have not had time to pay attention to my journal. During this time we have formed a female missionary society, which is now in a very prosperous way. And we have commenced a Sunday School, which contains nearly sixty scholars, and is likely to be of great service to our society. Since its commencement some of the children have obtained the pearl of great price, and are now happy in the Saviour's love: and thus is that passage verified, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." And some of the teachers, since the commencement of the School, have been brought to know HIM whom to know is life eternal; and are now more capable of imparting religious instruction to the children under their care. And thus it has been made manifest that, while watering others, themselves have been watered. May the Lord crown the school with abundant success.

During the last 6 months we have built a church, which has cost two thousand five hundred dollars, (five hundred and sixty two pounds ten shillings,) we have begged towards ten hundred dollars. This church is well attended and is likely to do well. We have also formed what you call in England a chapel fund, into which a great number of persons have agreed to pay two cents a week.

What with attending to these and many other things, and preaching thrice every Sunday in Philadelphia, I. have had little time to spare. It is evident all these things could not be done without many meetings and difficulties.

While engaged in all these things our congregations continued good, yet the work of the Lord did not seem to rise very much. So we agreed to have a prayer meeting every night for a week, at both the South and North ends of the city; for the purpose of praying for an out-pouring of the blessed Spirit, in his convincing, converting, and sanctifying influence (or power,) whose office it is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This we published in our congregations, on Sunday, January 30, 1831.

Monday evening, January 31, We had the first of our prayer-meetings; and we had a most powerful visit from heaven: believers were abundantly refreshed, and one soul obtained the pearl of great price. We continued the meeting two hours and a half, then broke up and went home, rejoicing from the banquet of perfume.

On Tuesday evening we met again, and notwithstanding the unfavourableness of the weather, a good congregation assembled; and we had a glorious out-pouring of the Spirit. A great many came up to the altar to be prayed for, some in pursuit of justification, and others of (entire) sanctification. Two obtained redemption in the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of their sins, and went home rejoicing in a sin-pardoning God. Two others obtained the blessing of full sanctification, who were so over-powered and filled with heaven, that they sunk down upon the floor and shouted, "Glory! glory!"

On Wednesday, February 2, we had a precious season: the power of God was felt in a conspicuous manner. Two in answer to prayer were powerfully convicted, and roared out by reason of the disquietude of their souls; they, however, did not get saved, but went away sorrowful. One or two others got saved, who came seeking HIM of whom Moses and the prophets did write—Glory to God in the highest.

Thursday Feb. 3, 1831, It being our regular preaching night, we agreed to have preaching and the prayer meeting after. It was sister Watkins's appointment; but she being unwell I spoke a little from Hab. iii. 2, "O Lord revive thy work." And I read a little from Br. W.G. Belham's Journal in Magazines, about the (partially) wrecked vessel; and this was made a blessing. We then commenced our prayer meeting, and felt the Lord was near at hand; the living waters flowed in our hearts. And all, I think, were constrained to say with Peter on the mount of transfiguration,

“Master, it is good for us to be here.” One was convicted who prior to the meeting seemed to be very wild and careless, and some got saved.

Friday 4, We held both a prayer meeting, and a fellowship meeting; there was powerful, affecting, lively speaking. The power of God came down like a mighty rushing wind, and many came up to the altar to be prayed for, who were in much distress for their souls. Some got saved; others went away in distress, determined to seek till they found that Jesus who makes the drooping sinner cheerful. Hallelujah, praise the Lord.

Sunday, Feb. 6, 1831, I preached thrice in the city, and gave the sacrament in the evening. Many communicated with us, and it was a profitable time. Some were in distress for their souls, but through unbelief did not obtain the blessing. Lord still ride on. Amen.

Monday, Feb. 7. We commenced our prayer meetings in the new church, in Southwark. We had a powerful out-pouring of the Spirit, twelve or thirteen came up to the altar to be prayed for; many got liberated from the guilt of sin, and knew the truth of that passage, “them whom the Son makes free, they shall be free indeed.” And some obtained deliverance from all sin, and were brought to know by experience what the Lord means when he says by the prophet, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your idols and filthiness will I cleanse you.”

Tuesday, 8, we had souls saved. On Wednesday I had to attend a meeting of the trustees. But I have been informed souls were saved in the prayer meeting. Thus all hands are at work, while we are engaged about the outward buildings, others were engaged in getting up the spiritual building. On Thursday night the altar was surrounded with mourners; some were comforted and went down to their houses justified, and others were sanctified, and felt that perfect love that casteth out sin.

Friday 11. One backslider got reclaimed, and two justified; one of whom had been seeking pardon for a year; and during the year, she had often been in agony for the pardon of her sins. I have spent hours in prayer with her, but on that night the Lord broke in upon her soul, and burst her bands asunder, loosed her chains, knocked off her fetters, and she heard the voice of joy and gladness, which has made many broken bones the past fortnight to rejoice. One reason why she did not obtain the blessing sooner was this, a person of learning once told her that there was no salvation for her; and although she did not give full credit to the expression, yet always when she went to be prayed for, the devil told her it might be true, her day of grace was past, as the learned man had said. This cramped her inquiries, and filled her with unbelief, till at this meeting the Lord restrained the power of the devil, and said to the roaring lion as to the waves, “Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further; so that the expression which before had plagued her, never came into her mind while she was engaged for the blessing, consequently she got through, Praise the Lord. .

On Saturday night we had a fellowship meeting. I could not attend, but I have been informed two three souls professed to get saved.

Thus during the last fourteen days we have had thirteen meetings for prayer and speaking our experience; and in every meeting souls have been saved. Surely there is nothing like prayer, like as the poet says “Prayer, prayer, sweet, sweet, prayer. Be it ever so simple there’s nothing like prayer.” It brings man near to his God; it is his highest consolation, and his only refuge in the hour of distress. These meetings have been rendered a blessing to our cause in Philadelphia; they have increased our congregations and increased our members, and been the means of uniting the members one to another. In these meetings many have been brought to experience a full salvation, a complete deliverance from all sin. They have been the means of bringing the talents of some into exercise, which before were in a great measure useless and dormant, particularly the converting talent. And they have led some into the nature of saving faith, that before had a very scanty knowledge of it.

There is something remarkable in the origin of these prayer meetings, perhaps as remarkable as in the origin of camp meetings in America and England. It is said, near about the same time that the camp meetings commenced in America, a thought rose in the minds of some of the brethren in England, which led to these meetings. So the Presbyterians in Philadelphia, and the Episcopalians in New York, and the Primitive Methodists in Philadelphia, all commenced at the same time to hold prayer meetings every night for a fortnight, to pray for an out-pouring of the Spirit upon the

people; and the Lord, in answer to prayer has in these three churches revived his work in a most remarkable manner. May the Lord ride on prosperously for his name's sake. Amen.

Yours in the Lord,

W. SUMMERSIDES.

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1831/276;