

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXV

October 11, 2015

No. 41

Protracted Meetings

(Jerry Fite)

Extensive public preaching and teaching over a period of consecutive days is connected with Charles Finney and “revivalism” in this country. He encouraged the practice of having daily preaching, maybe two or three times a day, and continuing the Gospel teaching for two to three weeks in order to save the lost. It became a popular method of evangelism in the 1820’s and associated with Finney’s “new measures” of “revivalism”.

While the practice of having daily preaching may have become popular through Mr. Finney in the optimistic religious times of the early 1800’s in this country, we see daily preaching in the first Century as a pattern for the spread of the Gospel in the days of the apostles of Christ. These chosen messengers of the gospel of Christ were being beaten and warned by their adversaries, yet, “...every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). Regardless if everyone is clamoring to hear the Gospel, or if the powers that be are striving to

shut the preaching down, the word must be preached.

The “*word of Christ*” is the “*power of God*” to save the lost (Romans 1:16). It is the spiritual “*seed*” that must be planted in the hearts of men through preaching and teaching before it can germinate unto salvation (Luke 8:11,15). Like “*rain*” and “*snow*”, the word is sent out accomplishing God’s purpose. He assures us, “*it shall not return unto Me void*” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Many Protestants call their protracted meetings “*Revivals*”. This concerns some, for Calvinists believe that a “*revival*” is all about what God does, not what man does. Some feel uncomfortable in having man prolong a period of time (a protracted meeting) expecting God to do His miracle of enlightening the eyes of the spiritually blind and saving them (a revival).

What are we to believe if after two or three days the enthusiasm is lagging among church members, and souls are not coming forward to be saved? Some

believe the “*protracted meeting*” should then end, for God clearly does not will to work His “*reviving*” power this particular week.

Our “*protracted meetings*” are rightly called “*Gospel Meetings*” for we “*meet daily*” to hear the “*Gospel*” preached. We know God opens the eyes of the blind through the preached word so the sinner can turn from darkness to light (Acts 26:17-18). Joyfully anticipating the week of enlightenment, turning and salvation, we invite as many as we can to come to the “*Meeting*”.

We do not close our “*protracted meeting*” on Wednesday if no one is baptized for the remission of their sins on Sunday, Monday or Tuesday. We do not consider the week a failure if some members are not attending as they should. The “*word of His grace*” will “*build up*” those who are in attendance (Acts 20:32). May we pray that God would bless our daily work to teach and preach His word, including our special Gospel Meeting efforts (2 Thess. 3:1 Acts 6:7.).