

TESTIMONY

FOR

THE CHURCH.

No. 20.

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THIS NUMBER.

To ALL those who recognize the voice of God in the gift of prophecy, as manifested in connection with the cause of present truth, this number of the Testimonies will possess especial interest.

1. "How to Conduct Meetings" is invaluable.

2. "How Shall we Keep the Sabbath" is important.

3. "Christian Recreation" is a subject that should be understood. This was reported as spoken before two hundred who were enjoying a season of innocent recreation beside Goguac Lake, near Battle Creek, May, 1870.

4. The Dreams given are of thrilling interest. May the great facts they illustrate deeply impress the reader.

5. "Camp-Meetings" are a matter of interest just now. This article sets forth the pure spirit of sacrifice, and the duty of the times.

6. And let all read the "Address to Ministers" with especial care. This also was reported as spoken before the General Conference of 1871.

7. We have not space to further particularize. God grant that the reader may be stirred to duty by the appeals in this work.

J. W.

TESTIMONY FOR THE CHURCH. NO. 20.

How to Conduct Meetings.

I recently received a letter from a brother I highly respect, making inquiries in regard to meetings, how they should be conducted. He inquires if there should be many prayers offered in succession, and then a relief of a few moments, and quite a number of prayers again.

From the light I have had upon the subject, I have decided that God does not require us, as we assemble for his worship, to make these seasons tedious and wearisome, by being obliged to remain bowed quite a length of time, listening to several lengthy prayers. Those in feeble health cannot endure this taxation without extreme weariness and exhaustion. The body is weary by remaining bowed down so long. And that which is worse still, the mind becomes so wearied by the continuous exercise of prayer that no spiritual refreshment is realized, and the meeting to them is worse than a loss. They have become wearied mentally and physically, and they have obtained no spiritual strength. Meetings for conference and prayer should not be made tedious. All should, if possible, be prompt to the hour

appointed; and if there are dilatory ones, who are half an hour or fifteen minutes even behind the time, there should be no waiting. If there are but two present, they can claim the promise. The meeting should open at the appointed hour, if possible, be there few or many present. Formality and cold stiffness should be laid aside, and all be prompt to duty. There should not be, upon any common occasion, prayer of more than ten minutes' duration. If any feel the burden of prayer, after there has been a change of position, and the exercise of singing or exhortation has relieved the sameness, then let them pray.

All should feel it a Christian duty to pray short. Tell the Lord just what you want without going all over the world. In private prayer, all have the privilege of praying as long as they desire, and of being as explicit as they please. They can pray for all their relatives and friends. The closet is the place to tell all their private difficulties, and trials, and temptations. A common meeting to worship God is not the place to open the privacies of the heart.

What is the object of assembling together? Is it to inform God? or to instruct him by telling him all we know in prayer? We meet together to edify one another by a mutual interchange of thoughts and feelings, thus making one another acquainted with our

aspirations, our hopes, and gathering strength, and light, and courage, from one another. By our earnest, heart-felt prayers, offered up in faith, we receive refreshment and vigor from the Source of our strength. These meetings should be most precious seasons, and made interesting to all who have any relish for religious things.

There are some who I fear do not take their troubles to God in private prayer, but reserve them for the prayer-meeting, and then do up their praying for several days in these meetings. Such may be named social conference and prayer-meeting killers. Their cold, frozen prayers and lengthy, backslidden testimonies cast a shadow. They emit no light. They edify no one. All are glad when they get through, and it is almost impossible to throw off the chill and darkness their prayers and exhortations have brought into the meetings. From the light which I have received, our meetings should be spiritual and social, and not too long. Reserve, pride, vanity, and fear of man, should be left at home. Little differences and prejudices should not be taken with us to these meetings. Like a united family, simplicity, meekness, mutual confidence, and love, should exist in the hearts of brethren and sisters who meet to be refreshed and invigorated by bringing their lights together.

Ye are the light of the world, says the

heavenly Teacher. All have not the same experience, and the same exercises in their religious life. But those of diverse experiences come together, and with simplicity and humbleness of mind, talk out their experience. All should have, and will have, an experience that is living, that is new and interesting, if they are pursuing the onward Christian course. A living experience is made up of daily trials, conflicts, and temptations, strong efforts and victories, and great peace and joy gained through Jesus. A simple relation of such experiences give light, strength, and knowledge, that will aid others in their advancement in the divine life. The worship of God should be both interesting and instructive to those who have any love for divine and heavenly things.

Jesus, the heavenly teacher, when he was upon the earth, among the children of men, did not hold himself aloof from them, but in order to benefit them, he came from Heaven to earth where they were, that the purity and holiness of his life might shine upon the pathway of all, and light the way to Heaven.

The Redeemer of the world sought to make his lessons of instruction plain and simple, that all might comprehend them. He generally chose the open air for his discourses. There were no walls which could inclose the multitude which followed him. But he

had special reasons for choosing the groves and the seaside to give his lessons of instruction, for he could have a commanding view of the landscape and scenery, and make use of objects and scenes with which those in humble life were familiar, to illustrate the important truths he made known to them. The works of God in nature, he associated with his lessons of instruction. He made use of the birds which were caroling forth their songs without a care, and the flowers of the valley glowing in their beauty, and the lily that reposed in its purity upon the bosom of the lake, the lofty trees, the cultivated lands, the waving grains, the barren soil, the tree that bore no fruit, the everlasting hills, the bubbling stream, the setting sun, tinting and gilding the heavens, to impress his hearers with divine truth. He connected the works of God's finger in the heavens and upon the earth with the words of life he wished to impress upon their minds, that as they should look upon the wonderful works of God in nature, his lessons would be fresh in their memories.

Christ, in all his efforts, sought to make his teachings interesting. He knew that a tired, hungry throng could not receive spiritual benefit, and he did not forget their bodily needs. He wrought a miracle to feed five thousand, who had gathered together to listen to the words of life which fell from his

lips. Jesus regarded his surroundings, when giving his precious truth to the multitude. The scenery was such as would attract the eye, and awake admiration in the breasts of the lovers of the beautiful. He could extol the wisdom of God in his creative works, and could bind up his sacred lessons by directing their minds through nature up to nature's God.

The landscape, the trees, the birds, the flowers of the valley, the hills, the lake, and the beautiful heavens, were associated in their minds with sacred truths, which would make them hallowed in memory, as they should look upon them after Christ's ascension to Heaven.

When Christ taught the people, he did not devote the time to prayer. He did not enforce upon them, as did the Pharisees, long, tedious ceremonies, and lengthy prayers. He taught his disciples how to pray: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray use not vain repetition, as the heathen do; for

they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye."

Christ impressed upon his disciples the idea that their prayers should be short, expressing just what they wanted, and no more. He gives the length and substance of their prayers, expressing their desires for temporal and spiritual blessings, and gratitude for the same. This sample prayer, how comprehensive! It covers the actual need of all. One or two minutes is long enough for any ordinary prayer. There may be instances where prayer, in a special manner, is indited by the Spirit of God, and where supplication is made in the Spirit. The yearning soul becomes agonized, and groans after God. The spirit wrestles as did Jacob, and will not be at rest without special manifestations of the power of God. This is as God would have it.

But there are many prayers offered in a dry, sermonizing manner. These pray to men, not to God. If they were praying to God, and really understood what they were doing, they would be alarmed at their audacity; for they delivered a discourse to the Lord in the mode of prayer, as though the Creator of the universe needed special information upon general questions in relation

to the things that were transpiring in the world. All such prayers are as sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal. They are made no account of in Heaven. Angels of God are wearied with them, as well as mortals who are compelled to listen to them.

Jesus was often found in prayer. He resorted to the lonely groves, or to the mountains, to make his requests known to his Father. When the business and cares of the day were ended, and the weary were seeking rest, Jesus devoted the time to prayer. We would not discourage prayer; for there is far too little praying and watching thereunto. And there is still less praying with the Spirit and the understanding also. Fervent and effectual prayer is always in place, and will never weary. Such prayer interests and refreshes all who have a love for devotion.

Secret prayer is neglected, and this is the reason why many offer such long, tedious, backslidden prayers, when assembled to worship God. They go over in their prayers a week of neglected duties, and pray round and round, hoping to make up for their neglect, and pacify their condemned consciences, which are scourging them. They hope to pray themselves into the favor of God. But frequently these prayers result in bringing other minds down to their own low level in spiritual darkness. If Christians would take home the teachings of Christ in regard to

watching and praying, they would become more intelligent in their worship of God.

How Shall we Keep the Sabbath ?

God is merciful. His requirements are reasonable, in accordance with the goodness and benevolence of his character. The object of the Sabbath was that all mankind might be benefited. Man was not made to fit the Sabbath; for the Sabbath was made after the creation of man, to meet his necessities. God rested, after he had made the world in six days. He sanctified and blessed the day upon which he rested from all his work which he had created and made. He set apart that special day for man to rest from his labor, and reflect, as he should look upon the earth beneath, and the heavens above, that God made all these in six days, and rested upon the seventh; and that his heart might be filled with love and reverence to his Maker, as he should behold the tangible proofs of his infinite wisdom.

In order to keep the Sabbath holy, it is not necessary that we inclose ourselves in walls, shut away from the beautiful scenes of nature, and also deprive ourselves of the free, invigorating air of heaven. We should in no case allow burdens and business transactions to divert our minds upon the Sabbath

of the Lord which he has sanctified. We should not allow even our minds to dwell upon things of a worldly character. The mind cannot be refreshed, enlivened, and elevated, by being confined nearly all the Sabbath hours within walls, listening to long sermons and tedious, formal prayers. The Sabbath of the Lord has been put to a wrong use, if thus celebrated. The object is not attained for which the Sabbath was instituted. The Sabbath was made for man, to be a blessing to him, by calling his mind from secular labor, to contemplate the goodness and glory of God. It is necessary that the people of God assemble to talk of him, to interchange thoughts and ideas in regard to the truths contained in the word of God, and to devote a portion of time to appropriate prayer. But these seasons, even upon the Sabbath, should not be made tedious by their length and lack of interest. During a portion of the day, all should have an opportunity to be out of doors.

How can the minds of children become better impressed, and receive a more correct knowledge of God, than in spending a portion of their time out of doors; not in play, but in company with their parents? Surrounded with nature's beautiful scenery, as their minds are associated with God in nature, by their attention being called to the tokens of God's love to man in his creative

works, their young minds will be attracted and interested. They will not be in danger of associating the character of God with everything that is stern and severe. But as they view the beautiful things he has created for the happiness of man, they will be led to regard him as a tender, loving Father. They will see that his prohibitions and injunctions are not made merely to show his power and authority, but that he has the happiness of his children in view. As the character of God puts on the aspect of love, benevolence, beauty, and attraction, they are drawn to love him. You can direct their minds to the lovely birds making the air musical with their happy songs, the spires of grass, and the gloriously tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air. All these proclaim the love and skill of the heavenly Artist, and show forth the glory of God. Parents, why not make use of the precious lessons God has given us in the book of nature to give our children the correct idea of his character? Those who sacrifice simplicity to fashion, and shut themselves away from the beauties of nature, cannot be spiritually minded. They cannot understand the skill and power of God as revealed in his creative works, therefore their hearts do not quicken and throb with new love and interest, and are not filled with awe and reverence as they see God in nature.

All who love God should do what they can to make the Sabbath a delight, holy and honorable. They cannot do this by seeking their own pleasure in sinful, forbidden amusements. They can do much to exalt the Sabbath in their families, and make it the most interesting day of the week. We should devote time to interest our children. We can walk out with them in the open air. A change will have a happy influence upon them. We can sit with them in the groves, and in the bright sunshine, and give their restless minds something to feed upon by conversing with them upon the works of God, and inspire them with love and reverence by calling their attention to the beautiful objects in nature. The Sabbath should be made so interesting to our families that its weekly return will be hailed with joy. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than to devise means to impart proper instruction to their families, and to interest them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God, and what he requires of us, in order to perfect Christian characters and to attain to eternal life. Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children shall look forward to it, and have a welcome in their hearts for it.

Christian Recreation.

I have been thinking what a contrast would be seen between the gathering that we are having here to-day and such gatherings as they are generally conducted by unbelievers. Instead of prayer and the mentioning of Christ and religious things, we should have the silly laugh and the trifling conversation. Their idea would be to have a general high time. It would commence in folly and end in vanity. We want in these gatherings to have them so conducted, and to so conduct ourselves, that when we return to our homes we can have a conscience void of offense toward God and man; a consciousness that we have not wounded nor injured in any manner those with whom we have been associated, or had an injurious influence over them.

Here is where very many fail. They do not consider that they are accountable for the influence they daily exert; that in all their associations in life, they must render an account to God for the impressions they make, and the influence they cast. If this influence is such as shall have a tendency to draw the mind away from God, and attract it into the channel of vanity and folly, and lead persons to seek for their own pleasure in amusements and foolish indulgences, they must give an account for this. And if these

persons are men and women of influence, if their position is such that their example will affect others, then the greater sin will rest upon them for neglecting to regulate their conduct by the Bible standard.

The occasion we are enjoying to-day is just according to my ideas of recreation. I have tried to give my *views* upon this subject, but they are better illustrated than expressed. I was here on this ground about one year since, when there was a gathering similar to this. Nearly everything passed off very pleasantly then, but still there were some things objectionable. There was considerable jesting and joking indulged in by some. All were not Sabbath-keepers, and there was an influence manifest that was not as pleasant as we could wish.

But I believe that while we are seeking to refresh our spirits and invigorate our bodies, we *are required of God* to use all our powers at all times to the best purpose. We may associate together as we are here to-day, and do all to the glory of God. We can, and should, conduct our recreations in such a manner that we shall be better fitted for the more successful discharge of the duties devolving upon us, and our influence be more beneficial upon those with whom we associate, especially upon an occasion like this, which should be of good cheer to us all. We can return to our homes improved

in mind and refreshed in body, and prepared to engage in the work anew with better hope and better courage.

We are of that class who believe that it is our privilege every day of our lives to glorify God upon the earth ; that we are not to live in this world merely for our own amusement, merely to please ourselves. We are here to benefit humanity, and be a blessing to society. And if we should let our minds run in that low channel that many who are seeking only vanity and folly permit their minds to run in, how can we be a benefit to our race and generation ? how can we be a blessing to society around us ? We cannot innocently indulge in any amusement which will unfit us for the more faithful discharge of ordinary life duties.

We want to seek the elevated and lovely. We want to direct the mind away from those things that are superficial and of no importance, and that have no solidity. What we desire is, to be gathering new strength from all that we engage in, from all these gatherings for the purpose of recreation, from all these pleasant associations. We want to be gathering new strength to become better men and women. We want from every source possible to gather new courage, new strength, new power, that we may elevate our lives to purity and holiness, and not come down upon the low

level of this world. We hear many who profess the religion of Jesus Christ speak often like this: "We must all come down upon a level." There is no such thing as Christians' coming down upon a level. As we embrace the truth of God and the religion of the Bible, this is not coming down, it is coming up upon a high and elevated level, a higher standpoint where we may commune with God.

For this very reason Christ humiliated himself to humanity, and took upon himself our natures, that by his own humiliation, and suffering, and sacrifice, he might become a stepping-stone to fallen men, that they might climb up upon his merits, and through his excellence and virtue receive from God an acceptance of their efforts to keep his law. There is no such thing here as coming down upon a level. It is the elevated and exalted platform of eternal truth that we are seeking to plant our feet upon. We are seeking to be more like the heavenly angels, more pure in heart, more sinless, more harmless and undefiled.

We are seeking for purity and holiness of life, that we may at last be fitted for the heavenly society in the kingdom of glory; and the only means to attain this elevation of Christian character is through Jesus Christ. There is no other way for the exaltation of the human family. Some talk of humiliation,

and of the sacrifice they make because they adopt the truth of heavenly origin ! Surely, this is not accepted by the world, it is not received by the unbeliever. They may talk of those that have embraced the truth and sought the Saviour, and represent them as leaving everything, and giving up everything, and making a sacrifice of everything that is worth retaining. But do not tell me this. I know better. My experience proves this to be otherwise. You need not tell me that we have to give up our dearest treasures, and receive no equivalent. No, indeed ! That God, that Creator, who planted the beautiful Eden for our first parents, and has planted for us the lovely trees and flowers, and everything that is beautiful and glorious in nature for the human race to enjoy, designed that they should enjoy it. Then do not think that God wishes us to yield up everything which it is for our happiness here to retain. All he requires us to give up is that which would not be for our good and happiness to retain.

That God who has planted these noble trees and clothed them with their rich foliage, and given us the brilliant and beautiful shades of the flowers, and whose handy and lovely work we see in all the realm of nature, does not design to make us unhappy ; he does not design that we shall have no taste, and take no pleasure in these things. It is his design that we shall enjoy them. It is his design that

we shall be happy in the charms of nature, which are of his own creating. It is right that we should choose such places as this grove for seasons of relaxation and recreation. But while we are here, it is not to devote our attention to ourselves merely, and fritter away precious time, and engage in amusements which will encourage a disrel- ish for sacred things. We have not come here to indulge in jesting and joking, in the senseless laugh and foolish talking. We here behold the beauties of nature. And what then? fall down and worship them? No, indeed. But as you behold these works of nature, let your mind be carried up higher to nature's God; let it be elevated to the Creator of the universe, and then adore the Creator who has made all these beautiful things for your benefit, for your happiness.

Men and women will delight in lovely paintings; but where do the artists get their ideas of these things to put upon the canvas? From nature's beautiful scenery. Persons are ready to worship the talent which can produce a beautiful drawing; but where do those who devote their lives to this work obtain their designs? From nature, only from nature; and yet these individuals will devote the entire strength of their being, and will bestow all their affections upon their tastes in this direction. Yet art can never attain the perfection seen in nature. Many withdraw their

minds from the beauties and glories of nature that our Creator has prepared for them to enjoy, and devote all the powers of their being to perfection of art; yet all these things are only imperfect copies from nature. The Maker of all these beautiful things is forgotten. I have seen many who would go into ecstasies over a picture of a sunset; but at the same time they could have the privilege of seeing an actual and glorious sunset almost every evening in the year. They can see the beautiful tints with which nature's Master and invisible Artist, with divine skill, has painted glorious scenes on shifting canvas, and carelessly turn from the heavenly-wrought picture to paintings of art, traced by imperfect fingers, and they will almost fall down and worship them. What is the reason of all this? It is because the enemy is almost constantly seeking to divert the mind from God. But when you present God, and the religion of Jesus Christ, will they receive them? No, indeed. They cannot accept of Christ. What! they make the sacrifice they would have to make to receive him? Not at all. But what is required? Simply their heart's holiest and best affections for Him who left the glory of the Father and came down to die for a race of rebels. He left his riches, his majesty, and his high command, and took upon himself our nature, that he might make a way of escape—to do what?

to humiliate you? to degrade you? No, indeed. To make a way of escape for you from hopeless misery, and to elevate you to his own right hand in his kingdom at last. For this, the great, the immense, sacrifice was made. And who can realize this great sacrifice? Who can appreciate it? None but those who understand the mystery of godliness, who have tasted the powers of the world to come, who have drank from the cup of salvation that has been presented to us. This cup of salvation the Lord offers us, while with his own lips he drained, in our stead, the bitter cup which our own sins had prepared, and which was apportioned us to drink. Yet we talk as though Christ who has made such a sacrifice, and manifested such love for us, would deprive us of everything that is worth having.

But what good would he deprive us of? He would deprive us of the privilege of giving up to the natural passions of the carnal heart. We cannot get angry just when we please, and retain a clear conscience and the approval of God. But are we not willing to give this up? Will the indulgence of corrupt passions make us any happier? It is because it will not, that there are restrictions laid upon us in this respect. It will not add to our enjoyment to get angry, and cultivate a perverse temper. — It is not for our happiness to follow the leadings of the natural

heart. Will we be made better to indulge them? No. They will cast a shadow in our households, and will throw a pall over our happiness when indulged in. Giving way to your own natural appetites will only injure your constitution, and tear your system to pieces. Therefore God would have you restrict your appetite, have control over your passions, and hold in subjection the entire man. And he has promised to give you strength if you will engage in this work.

The sin of Adam and Eve caused a fearful separation between God and man. And here Christ steps in between fallen man and God, and says to man, You may yet come to the Father; there is a plan devised through which God can be reconciled to man, and man to God; and through a mediator you can approach God. And here he stands to mediate for you. He is the great High Priest who is pleading in your behalf; and it is for you to come and present your case to the Father through Jesus Christ. Thus you can find access to God; and if you sin, your case is not hopeless. "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

I thank God that we have a Saviour. And there is no other way whereby men and women can be exalted except through Jesus Christ. Then let no one think that it is a great humiliation on his part to accept of

Jesus Christ ; for when we take that step, we take the first step toward true exaltation ; we take hold of the golden cord that links finite man with the infinite God, and elevates us, that we may be fitted for the society of pure and heavenly angels in the kingdom of glory.

Be not discouraged ; be not faint-hearted. Although you may have temptations ; although you may be beset by the wily foe ; yet, if you have the fear of God before you, angels that excel in strength will be sent to your help, and you can be more than a match for the powers of darkness. Jesus lives. He has died to make a way of escape for the fallen race ; and he lives to-day to make intercession for us, that we may be exalted to his own right hand. Have hope in God. The world is traveling the broad way ; and as you travel in the narrow way, and have principalities and powers to contend with, and the opposition of foes to meet, remember that there is provision made for you. Help has been laid upon One that is mighty ; and through him you can conquer.

Come out from among them and be separate, says God, and I will receive you, and ye shall be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. What a promise is this ! It is a pledge to you that you shall become members of the royal family, heirs of the heavenly kingdom. If a person is honored by,

or becomes connected with, any of the monarchs of earth, how it goes the rounds of the periodicals of the day, and excites the envy of those who do not think themselves so fortunate. But here is One who is king over all, the monarch of the universe, the originator of every good thing; and he says to us, I will make you my sons and daughters; I will unite you to myself; you shall become members of the royal family, and children of the heavenly King.

And then says Paul, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." Why should we not do this, when we have such an inducement, the privilege of becoming children of the most high God, the privilege of calling the God of Heaven our father? Is not that enough? And do you call this depriving you of everything that is worth having? Is this the giving up of everything that is worth possessing? Let me be united to God and his holy angels, for this is my highest ambition. You may have all the possessions of this world; but I must have Jesus; I must have a right to the immortal inheritance, the eternal substance. Let me enjoy the beauties of the kingdom of God. Let me delight in the paintings which his own fingers have colored. I may enjoy them. You may enjoy them. But we may

not worship them. But through them we may be directed to Him, and behold his glory who has made all these things for our enjoyment.

Again I would say, Be of good courage. Trust in the Lord. Do not let the enemy rob you of the promises. If you have separated yourselves from the world, God has said that he will be your father, and you shall be his sons and daughters. Is not that enough? What greater inducement could be presented before you? Is there any great object in being a butterfly, and having no substance nor aim in life? Oh! let me stand on the platform of eternal truth. Give me immortal worth. Let me grasp the golden chain that is let down from Heaven to earth, and let it draw me up to God and glory. This is my ambition. This is my aim. If others have no higher object than to dress up with bows and ribbons, and fantastic things here, if they can delight in outward display and satisfy their souls with it, let them enjoy it. But let me have the inward adorning. Let me be clothed with that meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. And I recommend it to you, young ladies and young men, for it is more precious in his sight than the gold of Ophir. It is this which makes a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Just so with you, my sisters, and you, young peo-

ple; it will make you more precious in the sight of Heaven than fine gold, yea, than the golden wedge of Ophir. I recommend to you, Jesus my blessed Saviour. I adore him. I magnify him. Oh! that I had an immortal tongue that I could praise him as I desire; that I could stand before the assembled universe and speak in praise of his matchless charms. And while I adore and magnify him, I want you to magnify him with me.

Praise the Lord, even when you fall into darkness. Praise him even in temptation. "Rejoice in the Lord always," says the apostle: "and again I say, Rejoice." Will that bring darkness and gloom into your families? No, indeed; it will bring a sunbeam. It will be the gathering of rays of eternal light from the throne of glory, and scattering them around you. Let me exhort you to engage in this work, scatter this light and life around you, not only in your own path, but in the paths of others with whom you associate. Let it be your object to make those around you better; to elevate them; to point them to Heaven and glory, and lead them to seek, above all earthly things, the eternal substance, the immortal inheritance, and the riches which are imperishable.

An Impressive Dream.

While at Battle Creek, in August, 1868, I dreamed of being with a large body of people. A portion of this assembly started out prepared to journey. We had heavily loaded wagons. As we journeyed, the road seemed to ascend. On one side of this road was a deep precipice. On the other side was a high, white, smooth wall, like the hard finish upon plastered rooms.

As we journeyed on, the road grew narrower and steeper. Some places in the road seemed very narrow, so much so that we concluded that we could travel no longer with the loaded wagons. We then loosed them from the horses, and took a portion of the luggage from the wagons and placed it upon the the horses, and journeyed on horseback.

As we progressed, the path still continued to grow narrow. We were obliged to press close to the wall, in order to save ourselves from falling off the narrow road, down the deep precipice. In doing this, the luggage on the horses pressed against the wall, and caused us to sway toward the precipice. We feared that we should fall, and be dashed in pieces on the rocks. We then cut the luggage from the horses, which fell over the precipice. We continued, on horseback, greatly fearing as we came to the narrower places in the road, that we should lose our

balance, and fall. At such times, a hand seemed to take the bridle and guide us over the perilous way. As the path grew more narrow, we decided that we could go no longer on horseback with safety, and we left the horses and went on foot, in single file, one following in the footsteps of another.

At this point, small cords were let down from the top of the pure white wall, which we eagerly grasped, to aid us in keeping our balance upon the path. As we traveled, the cord moved along with us. The path finally became so narrow that we concluded that we could travel more safely without our shoes; so we slipped them from our feet, and went on some distance without them. Soon it was decided that we could travel more safely without our stockings; these were removed, and we journeyed on with bare feet.

We then thought of those who had not accustomed themselves to privations and hardships. Where were such now? They were not in the company. At every change, some were left behind, and those only remained who had accustomed themselves to endure hardships. The privations of the way only made these more eager to press on to the end. Our danger of falling from the pathway increased. We pressed close to the white wall, yet could not place our feet fully upon the path, for it was too narrow.

We then suspended nearly our whole

weight upon the cords, and would exclaim, "We have hold from above! We have hold from above!" The same words were uttered by all the company in the narrow pathway. As we heard the sounds of revelry and mirth that seemed to come from the abyss below, we shuddered. We heard the profane oath, the vulgar jest, and low, vile songs. We heard the war songs and the dance songs. We heard instrumental music, and the loud laugh, mingled with cursing and cries of anguish and bitter wailing, and were more anxious than ever to keep upon the narrow, difficult pathway.

Much of the time we were compelled to suspend our whole weight upon the cords. And these increased in size as we progressed.

I noticed that the beautiful white wall was stained with blood. It caused a feeling of regret to see the wall thus stained. This feeling, however, lasted but for a moment, as I soon thought that it was all as it should be. Those who are following after will know that others have passed the narrow, difficult way before them, and will conclude that if others were able to pursue their onward course, they can do the same. And as the blood should be pressed from their aching feet, they would not faint with discouragement; but, seeing the blood upon the wall,

they would know that others had endured the same pain.

At length, we came to a large chasm at which our path ended. There was nothing now to guide the feet, nothing upon which to rest them. Our whole reliance must be upon the cords, which had increased in size, until they were as large as our bodies. Here we were for a time thrown into perplexity and distress. We inquired in fearful whispers, "To what is the cord attached?"

My husband was just before me. The large drops of sweat were falling from his brow. The veins in his neck and temples were increased to double their usual size, and suppressed, agonizing groans came from his lips. The sweat was dropping from my face, and I felt such anguish as I had never felt before. A fearful struggle was before us. If we fail here, all the difficulties of our journey had been experienced for naught. Before us, on the other side of the chasm, was a beautiful field of green grass, about six inches high. I could not see the sun, but bright, soft beams of light, resembling fine gold and silver, were resting on this field. Nothing I had seen upon earth could compare in beauty and glory with this field.

But could we succeed in reaching it? was the anxious inquiry. Should the cord break, we must perish. Again, in whispered anguish, the words were breathed, "What

holds the cord?" For a moment we hesitated to venture. Then we exclaimed, "Our only hope is to trust wholly to the cord. It has been our dependence all the difficult way. It will not fail us now." Still we were hesitating and distressed. The words were then spoken, "God holds the cord. We need not fear." These words were then repeated by those behind us, accompanied with, "He will not fail us now. He has brought us thus far in safety."

My husband then swung himself over the fearful abyss into the beautiful field beyond. I immediately followed. And oh, what a sense of relief and gratitude to God we felt! I heard voices raised in triumphant praise to God. I was happy, perfectly happy.

I awoke, and found that from the anxiety I had experienced in passing over the difficult route, every nerve in my body seemed to be in a tremor. This dream needs no comment. It made such an impression upon my mind that probably every item in it will be vivid before me while my memory shall continue.

Camp-Meetings.

There can be no influence so detrimental to a camp-meeting, or any gathering for religious worship, as much visiting and careless conversation. Frequently men and women

assemble in companies, and engage in conversation upon common subjects, which do not relate to the meeting. Some have brought their farms with them, and others their houses, laying their plans for building. Some are dissecting the characters of others, and have no time or disposition to search their own hearts, to discover the defects in their own characters, that they may correct their wrongs, and perfect holiness in the fear of God. If all who profess to be followers of Christ, would improve the time out of meeting in conversing upon the truth, in dwelling upon the Christian's hope, in searching their own hearts, and in earnest prayer before God, pleading for his blessing, there would be a much greater work accomplished than we have yet seen. Unbelievers, who falsely accuse those who believe the truth, would be convinced, because "of their good conversation in Christ." The words and actions are the fruit which we bear: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

God gave direction to the Israelites to assemble before him in the place which he should choose, and observe special days, at set periods, wherein no unnecessary work was to be done; but the time was to be devoted to a consideration of the blessings of God bestowed upon them. At these special seasons they were to bring gifts, free-will offerings, and

thank-offerings, unto the Lord, according as the Lord had blessed them. They were directed to rejoice—the man-servant and maid-servant, the stranger, the fatherless and widow—that God had by his own wonderful power brought them from servile bondage to the enjoyment of freedom. And they were commanded not to appear before the Lord empty. They were to bring tokens of their gratitude to God for his continual mercies and blessings bestowed upon them. These offerings were varied according to the estimate which the donors placed upon the blessings they were privileged to enjoy. Thus the characters of the people were plainly developed. Those who placed a high value upon the blessings God bestowed upon them, brought offerings in accordance with their appreciation of his blessings. Those whose moral powers were stupefied and benumbed by selfishness and idolatrous love of the favors received, rather than of fervent love for their bountiful Benefactor, brought meager offerings. Thus their hearts were revealed. Besides these special religious feast-days of gladness and rejoicing, the yearly passover was to be commemorated by the Jewish nation. The Lord covenanted that, if they were faithful in the observance of his requirements, he would bless them in all their increase, and in all the works of their hands.

God requires no less of his people in these

last days, in sacrifices and offerings, than he did of the Jewish nation. Those whom God has blessed with a competency, also the widow and the fatherless, should not be unmindful of his blessings. Especially should those whom he has prospered render to God the things that are God's. They should appear before him with a spirit of self-sacrifice, and bring their offerings in accordance with the blessings he has bestowed upon them. But many whom God prospers manifest base ingratitude to him. If his blessings rest upon them, and he increases their substance, they make these bounties as cords to bind them to the love of their possessions; and they allow worldly business to take possession of their affections, and their entire being, and neglect devotion and religious privileges. They cannot afford to leave their business cares, and come before God, even once a year. They turn the blessings of God into a curse. They serve their own temporal interests, at the neglect of his requirements.

Men with their thousands remain at home, year after year, engrossed in their worldly cares and interests, and feel that they cannot afford to make the small sacrifice of attending the yearly gatherings to worship God. He has blessed them in basket and in store, and surrounded them with his benefits on the right hand and on the left; yet they withhold from God the small offerings he has

required of them. They love to serve themselves. Their souls will be like the unrefreshed desert without the dew or rain of heaven. The Lord has brought to them the precious blessing of his grace. He has delivered them from the slavery of sin, and the bondage of error, and has opened to their darkened understandings the glorious light of present truth. And shall these evidences of God's love and mercy call forth no gratitude in return? Will those who profess to believe that the end of all things is at hand be blind to their own spiritual interest, and live for this world and this life alone? Do they expect their eternal interest will take care of itself? Spiritual strength will not come without an effort on their part.

Many who profess to be looking for the appearing of our Lord, are anxious, burdened gain-seekers for this world. They are blind to their eternal interest. They labor for that which satisfieth not. They spend their money for that which is not bread. They strive to content themselves with the treasures they have laid up upon the earth, which must perish. And they neglect the preparation for eternity, which should be the first and only real work of their lives.

Let us all who possibly can, attend these yearly gatherings. All should feel that God requires this of them. If they do not avail themselves of the privileges God has pro-

vided for them to become strong in him, and in the power of his grace, they will grow weaker and weaker, and have less and less desire to consecrate all to him. Come, brethren and sisters, to these sacred convocation meetings, to find Jesus. He will come up to the feast. He will be present, and he will do for you that which you need most to have done. Your farms should not be considered of greater value than the higher interests of the soul. All the treasures you possess, be they ever so valuable, would not be rich enough to buy you peace and hope, which would be infinite gain, if it cost you all you have, and the toils and sufferings of a lifetime. To have a strong, clear sense of eternal things, and a heart of willing obedience to yield all to Christ, are blessings of more value than all the riches, and pleasures, and glories, of this world.

These camp-meetings are of importance. They cost something. The servants of God are wearing out their lives to help the people, while many of them appear as if they did not want help. For fear of losing a little of this world's gain, some let these precious privileges come and go, as though they were of but little importance. Let all who profess to believe the truth, respect every privilege that God offers them to obtain clearer views of his truth, and his requirements, and the necessary preparation for his coming.

A calm, cheerful, and obedient, trust in God is what he requires.

You need not weary yourselves with busy anxieties and needless cares. Work on for the day, faithfully doing the work which God's providence assigns you, and he will have a care for you. Jesus will deepen and widen your blessings. You must make efforts if you have salvation at last. Come to these meetings prepared to work. Leave your home cares, and come to find Jesus, and he will be found of you. Come with your offerings as God has blessed you. Show your gratitude to your Creator, the giver of all your benefits, by a free-will offering. Let none who are able come empty-handed. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

The objects of camp-meetings are to separate from business cares, and burdens, and devote a few days of time exclusively to seeking the Lord. The time should be occupied in self-examination, close searching of heart, and penitential confession of sins, and renewing our vows to the most high God. If any come to these meetings for less worthy objects, we hope the character of the meeting

will be such as to bring the minds of all to the proper objects of the meetings.

Some are sufferers through extra labor in preparing for camp-meeting. They are liberal-souled people, and want nothing done with stinginess. Some make large provisions; and are thoroughly wearied out when they come to the meeting, and as soon as they are released from the pressure of work, exhausted nature causes them to feel that she has been abused. Some of these persons may never have attended a camp-meeting before, and are not informed in regard to what preparations they are required to make. They lose some of the precious meetings they had purposed to attend. Now these make a mistake in making so large preparation. Nothing should be cooked, or taken to the camp-meeting, unless it be the most healthful articles, cooked in a simple manner, free from all spices and grease.

I am well convinced that none need to make themselves sick preparing for camp-meeting, if they observe the laws of health in their cooking. If they make no cake, or pies; but cook simple graham bread, and depend on fruit, canned or dried, they need not get sick in preparing for the meeting, and they need not be sick while at the meeting. None should go through the entire meeting without some warm food. There are always

cook-stoves upon the ground where this may be obtained.

Brethren and sisters must not be sick upon the encampment. If they clothe themselves properly in the chill of morning, and at night, and are particular to vary their clothing according to the changing weather, so as to preserve proper circulation, and strictly observe regularity in sleeping, and in eating of simple food, and eat nothing between meals, they need not be sick. They may be well during the meeting, and be able to appreciate, with clear minds, the truth, and may return to their homes refreshed in body and in spirit. Those who have been engaged in hard labor from day to day now cease their exercise, therefore should not eat their average amount of food. If they do, their stomachs will be overtaxed. It is the brain power we wish to be especially vigorous at these meetings, and in the most healthy condition to hear the truth, and to appreciate it, and to retain it, that all may practice it after their return from the meeting. If the stomach is burdened with too much food, even of a simple character, the brain force will be called to the aid of the digestive organs. There is a benumbed sensation experienced upon the brain. There is an almost impossibility of keeping the eyes open. The very truths which should be heard, understood, and practiced, by them, they lose