

An Appeal to Prepare the Heart to Receive the Holy Spirit

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[A talk given by Ellen G. White on March 28, 1901, at Battle Creek Michigan, to a gathering of publishing leaders. As Mrs. White spoke, her mind turned from this smaller meeting to the General Conference session, which was to begin a few days later, on April 2.]

I feel an intense desire that at this meeting we shall come into right relation with God. We may have great ambition, all the ambition it is possible for us to have; we may have all the activity it is essential for us to have; but unless we are close to our Saviour, unless His power and grace are with us individually, we may be sure that we shall go from this place thinking that we have not had a very wonderful meeting. It rests with us individually to decide what this meeting shall be to us. Since the last time we assembled in General Conference, we have all been making our record, and at this meeting we shall continue to make our record. Every time we assemble together, angels of God are here. Evil angels also are here.

If we have neglected our duties, if we have come up to this meeting unprepared to meet with God, unprepared to worship Him in the spirit of truth and in the beauty of holiness, let us, at the very beginning of the meeting, humble our hearts before God and put away everything that interposes between our souls and Him.

As I was coming over from Australia, during the long weeks that I spent on the ocean, I had some precious experiences. Some things were opened before me, of which I will speak to you later. The words were spoken to me, "Enter into no controversy. Take no part in any strife or in anything that would divert the mind from God. I have a message for you to bear, and as this message is given to the people, it is not for you to try to make them believe it. This is not your work. You are to go straight forward in the work I have given you. I will strengthen you to do this work."

On the way over I was in great perplexity as to how my health would stand the voyage. The passengers smoked and drank continually. And night after night they danced till twelve o'clock on the deck over my head. All the response they made to my appeals for quietude was, "Let Mrs. White go somewhere else." I tried to go "somewhere else." I went to the deck of the second cabin, but there I found smoking and drinking and noise. There was no "somewhere else" for me. A few days before we were to enter port, Willie came to me and said, "We are nearing the last night of the trip, when we shall have more noise than ever before; but I am praying for a storm." "So am I," I said.

The night before the passengers were to have their carousal, I went into a little anteroom, and lay down. I fell asleep, and presently I was awakened by a voice speaking to me. I knew as soon as I awoke what this meant, for the room was filled with a sweet fragrance, as of beautiful flowers. I fell asleep once more, and was wakened again the same way. Then words were spoken to me, assuring me that the Lord would protect me; that He had a work for me to do. Comfort, encouragement, and direction were given to me, and I was greatly blessed. I felt then that I would make no more complaints in regard to the noise and the smoking.

And lo, the next morning a storm arose, and continued till just before we entered the harbor. The passengers, instead of dancing and singing, were lying in their berths. The boat rocked and tossed, and I lay in my berth all day, not even daring to turn over lest I should be sick.

I felt very grateful for that storm. It lasted long enough to prevent any carousal. And just before we entered the harbor, it cleared away, and the sea became as smooth as it had been all the way over.

I feel an intense desire that this shall be a meeting where God can preside. This is an important time, a very important time. There is a great work to do. But whether the meeting shall be a success depends on us individually. We can make a heaven here during this meeting. We may make a heaven or a hell for ourselves, just as we choose.

Light has been given me that this is the wrong time of the year to hold the General Conference. Everything in nature is sere and brown. It is God's desire that when His people assemble for spiritual exercises, they should have the best and highest thoughts. He wants them to be in the very best condition of mind and body. They should choose the very best season of the year for a meeting of this kind.

Plans are now to be laid for the advancement of God's work, and if ever there was a time when God's people should be strictly guarded in their diet, it is now. I am going to say this almost every time I speak to you, so I shall begin now. When you sit down to your meals, do not eat half a dozen different kinds of food. Eat only two or three kinds. If you have not yet learned to be health reformers—and there are some who have stood right in the way of health reform—it is time that you did learn. It is time for you to understand what health reform means.

Many have lost their spiritual discernment by making an idol of the stomach. The poor stomach does not care to be idolized in this way. It wants a chance to carry forward its work in the beautiful order which God has established. It will do this work if man will act like a rational being. The food which is taken into the stomach should be of a character to promote health, intelligence, and spirituality. Dyspeptics have a dyspeptic religion. Those who overload the stomach, and then, without taking any special exercise, come to meeting, will find that they are unable to keep awake. Because of the condition of the stomach, many place themselves on the

negative side when they should be on the affirmative. Meetings are often hindered by resolutions which, occasioned by dyspepsia, should never have seen the light of day.

God desires us to worship Him in holiness, glorifying His name. He wants you to remember, when you eat, to partake of food that will help you to serve Him. Because there is a variety of food placed before you, do not eat some of all the different kinds, and then go to meeting with an overloaded stomach, unprepared to make correct decisions, unprepared to have your mental machinery worked by the Spirit of God.

If you are not learning by self-denial and self-sacrifice to take care of the human machinery, you are not following Christ, but another leader.

There are solemn and important decisions to be made at this meeting, and God wants every one of us to stand in right relation to Him. He wants us to do a great deal more praying and a great deal less talking. He wants us to keep the windows of the soul opened heavenward. The threshold of heaven is flooded with the light of God's glory, and God will let this light shine into the heart of everyone who at this meeting will stand in right relation to Him.

Some have said that they thought that at this meeting several days ought to be spent in prayer to God for the Holy Spirit, as at the day of Pentecost. I wish to say to you that the business which may be carried on at this meeting is just as much a part of the service of God as is prayer. The business meeting is to be just as much under the direction of the Spirit as the prayer meeting. There is danger of our getting a sentimental, impulsive religion. Let the business transacted at this meeting stand forth in such sacredness that the heavenly host can approve of it. We are to guard most sacredly the business lines of our work. Every line of business carried on here is to be in accordance with the principles of heaven.

God wants you to stand in a position where He can breathe upon you the Holy Spirit, where Christ can abide in the heart. He wants you at the beginning of this meeting to lay off whatever of controversy, of strife, of dissension, of murmuring, you have been carrying. What we need is a great deal more of Christ and none of self. The Saviour says, "Without Me ye can do nothing."

I did not mean to say these words today, but I feel that it is time for us to seek the Lord more earnestly. My most precious time for communing with God is in the morning. I plead with Him for help, and I feel—no, I do not trust to feeling—I know that He will answer me. I trust in the word of the living God. I make this word my constant dependence.

We have come to a point where God is going to work for His people. He wishes them to be a representative people, distinct from all other peoples in our world. He wants them to stand on vantage ground, because He gave His life that they might stand there. Do not disappoint the Lord.

Remember that you will make this meeting what it is. You can have heaven as you come and as you go. But in order for this to be, self must be lost in Christ. We must eat the bread of heaven. This is like taking each day the leaves of the tree of life. These will restore in us the moral image of God. This image has been obliterated, but it can be restored by the eating of the bread of life.

I pray that this may indeed be a crisis in our work, when we shall step over the gulf and lay hold of God's strength. He says, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me" [Isaiah 27:5].

In the place of going to your rooms, as was done when I was here ten years ago, and talking of difficulties, talking the Holy Spirit away, talk with God, and He will be with you. Hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. I know that God wants you to have something to say to the churches, and what you say is to be like apples of gold in pictures of silver. No cheap words are to be uttered. We have a heaven of treasure, for when God gave Christ to our world, He gave us all heaven. And if you do not draw from heaven power and grace and treasures of truth to give to the people, then, for Christ's sake, stop your work till you realize the importance of a close union with God.

What we need is to be elevated and sanctified and purified. Then the righteousness of Christ will go before us, and the glory of God will be our reward. Let us come into close touch with God, that we may see more clearly His purity and holiness, and rise higher and higher at each meeting.

If some of you, though having reached the [physical] stature of men, have brought with you your childish ideas and childish disposition, will you now put away all childishness, and get the grace of God? Let us grasp the great and rich treasures God has for us. God is willing to do great things for us. But we carry with us such a load of deformity that we have no room for the Saviour. He cannot sit on the throne of the heart, because there is no place for Him. Give Him a place.

He is knocking, knocking at your heart. Open the door and let Him in. Empty the heart of all selfishness, by living right, eating right, thinking right. Enthroned the Saviour in the heart. With His long human arm He encircles the race, while with His divine arm He grasps the throne of the Infinite. I am hungry for the Spirit of God. Are you, brethren? My soul longs for it. May the Lord help us to take steps heavenward.

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