

My heart was so full
of love that it
overflowed essay



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On a Sabbath evening in the autumn of 1821, I made up my mind that I would settle the question of my soul's salvation at once, that if it were possible I would make my peace with God. But as I was very busy in the affairs of the office, I knew that without great firmness of purpose, I should never effectually attend to the subject. I therefore, then and there resolved, as far as possible, to avoid all business, and everything that would divert my attention, and to give myself wholly to the work of securing the salvation of my soul. I carried this resolution in to execution as sternly and thoroughly as I could.

I was, however, obliged to be a good deal in the office. But as the providence of God would have it, I was not much occupied either on Monday or Tuesday; and had opportunity to read my Bible and engage in prayer most of the time.... This was just the revelation that I needed. I felt myself justified by faith; and, so far as I could see, I was in a state in which I did not sin. Instead of feeling that I was sinning all the time, my heart was so full of love that it overflowed. My cup ran over with blessing and with love; and I could not feel that I was sinning against God.

Nor could I recover the least sense of guilt for my past sins. Of this experience I said nothing that I recollect, at the time, to anybody; that is, of this experience of justification. Religion is the work of man. It is something for man to do. It consists in obeying God. It is man's duty. It is true, God induces him to do it. He influences him by his Spirit, because of his great wickedness and reluctance to obey. If it were not necessary for God to influence men — if men were disposed to obey God, there would be no occasion to pray, “ O Lord, revive thy work.

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The ground of necessity for such a prayer is, that men are wholly indisposed to obey; and unless God interpose the influence of his Spirit, not a man on earth will ever obey the commands of God. There is so little principle in the church, so little firmness and stability of purpose, that unless they are greatly excited, they will not obey God. They have so little knowledge, and their principles are so weak, that unless they are excited, they will go back from the path of duty, and do nothing to promote the glory of God.

The state of the world is still such, and probably will be till the millennium is fully come, that religion must be mainly promoted by these excitements. How long and how often has the experiment been tried, to bring the church to act steadily for God, without these periodical excitements! Many good men have supposed, and still suppose, that the best way to promote religion, is to go along uniformly, and gather in the ungodly gradually, and without excitement. But however such reasoning may appear in the abstract, facts demonstrate its futility.

If the church were far enough advanced in knowledge, and had stability of principle enough to keep awake, such a course would do; but the church is so little enlightened, and there are so many counteracting causes, that the church will not go steadily to work without a special excitement. As the millennium advances, it is probable that these periodical excitements will be unknown. Then the church will be enlightened, and the counteracting causes removed, and the entire church will be in a state of habitual and steady obedience to God.

The entire church will stand and take the infant mind, and cultivate it for God. Children will be trained up in the way they should go, and there will be no such torrents of worldliness, and fashion, and covetousness, to bear away the piety of the church, as soon as the excitement of a revival is withdrawn.

“ The Meeting Continued All Night, Both by the White & Black People”:

Georgia Camp Meeting, 1807 The Methodists have lately had a Camp Meeting in Hancock County, about three miles south of Sparta in Georgia.

The meeting began on Tuesday, 28th July, at 12 o'clock, and ended on Saturday following. We counted thirty-seven Methodist preachers at the meeting; and with the assistance of a friend I took an account of the Tents, and there were one hundred and seventy-six of them, and many of them were very large. From the number of people who attended preaching at the rising of the sun, I concluded that there were about 3000 persons, white and black together, that lodged on the ground at night. I think the largest congregation was about 4000 hearers.

Friday was the greatest day of all. We had the Lord's Supper at night, by candlelight, where several hundred communicants attended; and such a solemn time I have seldom seen on the like occasion; three of the preachers fell helpless within the altar; and one lay a considerable time before he came to himself From that the work of convictions and conversion' spread, and a large number were converted during the night, and there was no intermission until the breake of day at that time many stout hearted sinners were conquered.

On Saturday morning we had preaching at the rising of the sun; and then with many tears we took leave of each other. I suppose there was about eighty souls converted at that meeting, including white and black people. It is thought by many people that they never saw a better Camp Meeting in Georgia.