

New Years' Address, January 1867

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the importance of examining our hopes and prospects for a happy end, living with a sense of eternity, and avoiding self-deception, highlighting the need for a searching ministry to deal honestly and faithfully with people.

Scripture: Exodus 33:16, Psalm 139:23, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 7:21, Luke 12:35, Luke 21:34, 2 Timothy 3:13

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

J.C. Philpot delivers a powerful sermon reflecting on the passage of time and the journey of life towards eternity. He emphasizes the importance of self-examination, spiritual life, and the need to be prepared for the end of our voyage into eternity. Philpot urges believers to be vigilant against self-deception, to seek true faith and vital godliness, and to be wary of false prophets and shallow professions of religion. He encourages a faithful and discerning ministry that addresses the dangers of self-deception and guides souls towards genuine spiritual growth and salvation.

Transcript

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How sensibly does each recurring year remind us of the flight of time. Ever rolling onward, like a mighty river, and bearing us on its broad and rapid bosom, Time, Time, that mysterious, inexplicable, and inexorable course of nature which we call by that name, hurries us unceasingly on, willingly or unwillingly, to that vast and boundless ocean of eternity into which it flows, and in which it is absorbed and lost. We did not launch ourselves on this mighty, outspread, and ever-flowing stream, but when reason dawned, found ourselves already floating on it. And as we know not the beginning, so we thought little of the end of the voyage. Amid the sports and tears of childhood, the studies and play of boyhood, the airy dreams and rising passions of youth, or the soberer pursuits of advancing manhood, most of us spent our days heedless of the flight of time, and with no concern of our nearer advance to eternity each day.

Life and time were so linked together with us that they seemed as if but one. We did not know, or if we knew it, the idea was at once thrust aside as an unwelcome intruder, that they really were so distinct that with us it might soon cease to be time, but that with us life would never cease to be. But the Lord, who had purposes of grace towards us, and cared for and loved us more than we cared for and loved ourselves, would not allow us ever so to live as those who have no hope and are without God in the world. He who had chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and launched us at the appointed season,

without our consent or knowledge, on the river of time, that it might bring us into the ocean of eternity, there to dwell forever in his presence and in the enjoyment of his love, would not allow us to remain ever destitute of that eternal life which he had given us in his dear Son, and which consists in knowing him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

He was, therefore, pleased, by a special act of his sovereign grace and divine power, to quicken our souls into spiritual life- and though his dealings have been so various with us, both in Providence and in grace, that no fixed standard can be set up, or rigid lines drawn, which shall embrace every case, for "he works all things after the counsel of his own will," yet this at least we may say of them that they all have been ways of mercy and truth, and have all tended to one and the same point and been directed to one and the same end- to manifest and glorify himself in our free and full salvation, to reveal to our heart and enshrine in our affections the Son of his love, and thus make us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. This, at least, we may say is our chief end and aim to realize and enjoy, though in many points we may seem much to come short, and though, through the power of temptation and unbelief, we may still have many painful trials to exercise both our faith and our patience.

If, then, according to our figure, Time is a river, and we being embarked on it are now floating down on its bosom, it may be well every now and then to examine what are the hopes and prospects of our voyage coming to a happy end. The course of the river is winding and tortuous; the banks are sometimes as if out of sight, and at others well near meeting; the stream deep and rapid; the channel full of hidden rocks; the crew for the most part heedless of danger, and more bent on pleasure and amusement than disposed to watch or work; and few on board seem to be alive to the perils of the voyage, or anxiously looking to its end. That it must end we all know, but when and how we know not. Will the end be soon? Will the end be happy? When it comes, will it find us prepared to meet so solemn an event? These are questions which may well exercise our thoughts and lead our minds to earnest prayer and self-examination how matters stand personally with ourselves.

With some of us, either through advancing age or the inroads of sickness and debility, the vast ocean appears almost in sight, and its waves are already seen rolling and whitening in the dim horizon. When once we meet its swellings, and they begin to toss up and down our frail bark, and wash over the deck as if they would swallow us up alive as those that go down into the pit, the reality of our faith and hope will be proved, and it will be made manifest whether our profession of religion has been only a name to live, or the effect and fruit of a vital work of God upon our soul. How rich a mercy will it then be to have our evidences so clearly brightened, our faith so enlarged and strong, our doubts and fears so fully dispelled, and our soul so blessed and favored with the smiles and presence of the Lord that when death comes we may have nothing to do but to die.

But though the whole work is of his grace, and we shall have nothing and enjoy nothing at that solemn hour but what he may freely give, (for without him we can do nothing,) yet it will be our wisdom and mercy to attend to the Lord's own words beforehand, while life and health and opportunity still admit. "Be dressed for service and well prepared, as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks." (Luke 12:35, 36.) In another place, also, how graciously does he bid us "take heed to ourselves lest at any time our hearts be over-charged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares;" and how he urges it on our consciences- "Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:16.)

Nothing is more easy, as nothing is more common, than self-deception in a point where self-deception is eternal ruin. The most suspicious of men are least suspicious here. The keen eye which scrutinizes every appearance of fraud without, never turns its gaze to examine what fraud there may be going on within; and he who suspects everybody never suspects himself. When the home is threatened by robbers, scarcely any precaution is considered enough to meet the danger. Bolts and bars, iron shutters and safes are bought, and a whole army of police and watchmen paid to guard against suffering loss of property by force, and every check that ingenuity can devise has been invented to guard against loss of property by fraud.

But what care or precaution is taken, what anxious days or watchful nights are spent, lest the violent assaults of sin or the subtle deceits of Satan should rob us of our own soul? No, so willing are most, to be plundered of that precious jewel, to lose which is to lose their all, and so desirous to be deceived in that very, we may almost add that only thing whence recovery is impossible, that they pay men on purpose to rob and deceive them; so that he who robs them most unblushingly, and defrauds them most thoroughly and successfully, carries off as his reward in pay or popularity the highest prizes of his profession.

We do not say that all this huge mass of robbery and deception is done of willful, deliberate purpose, either of the robber or the robbed, the defrauder or the defrauded; for the word of truth declares of "seducers and evil men" that they are "deceiving and being deceived"- first "deceived," so as to believe their own lie, and then seeking by deceit to impose that lie on others. (2 Tim. 3:13.) But to deceive, to lull asleep, to proclaim "peace, peace," where there is no peace, to sew pillows to all armholes, is to every discerning eye, beyond all doubt or question, the busy trade and active employment of hundreds of men and ministers who, knowing nothing themselves of the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit or the work of faith with power, rest themselves, and easily persuade others to rest also, in a form of godliness while they deny the power thereof. The Lord has solemnly and repeatedly warned us against all such thieves and robbers. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" (Matt. 7:15, 16.) Yes, by their fruits we may know them; for where do we see in them those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God?" Where do we see in them or in their followers that separation from the world, that fear of God, that tenderness of conscience, that humility of soul, that brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit, that spirituality of mind and conversation, that holiness of life and consistency in walk and conduct which are the scriptural marks and fruits of vital godliness?

But besides fixing our eyes on others and weighing them in the scales of the sanctuary, which is often necessary in order to guide our own feet and determine our own conduct, do we not need also to take special heed to ourselves, and well and carefully put into the same unerring scales our own religion, lest we, though in a different way, should fall into the same dreadful trap of Satan? Many see others wrong who do not see themselves wrong, and, like David, unmercifully cut off a tripping neighbor while they tenderly spare a stumbling self. But the Lord has given us a solemn warning to take heed to ourselves. "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven- but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21.) We need no other testimony to convince us that many who are buoyed up by false hopes from themselves, or by others, will find themselves fearfully mistaken, and, concerning faith, will make dreadful shipwreck. Few of the barks which we now see spreading their sails on every side will make a happy voyage. Most will go down at that spot where the river flows into the sea, and Time and Eternity meet. How will it fare with us? Amid so many wrecks, shall we escape the

general disaster? All whose eyes rest on these pages will not see God nor behold his face in righteousness.

But how rare it is to hear any warning voice raised from the pulpit or the press against the evils and the perils of self-deception. How rare to find in any sermon, preached or published, a close, searching word addressed to the heart and conscience of those who profess to have received the truth. The wicked are warned, and the dead in sin cut off with no unsparing hand; seekers are encouraged still to press on; the cast down comforted; and the doctrines of grace boldly and faithfully proclaimed. But where are we warned against the danger of self deception, of a graceless profession, of having only a name to live, of resting on shallow, imperfect evidences, and of coming short at the last, of eternal life? But these are the very points on which living souls are usually most exercised, and in which they find and feel that danger chiefly dwells. It is quietly assumed that all who profess to have received the truth are real believers, and that their very reception of the truth is an evidence of divine life.

But this quiet assumption is guilty of two evils. It passes, first, over the very spots in experience where the living family are usually most deeply tried- and, secondly, plasters with untempered mortar a wall which is ready to fall, and which should rather be pulled down. As a proof of this, just cast your eyes around, and if you are at all connected, as most probably you are, with a place and people professing the truth, you will not have far to look. In our churches and congregations we have scores of what we may term common believers. They like to hear the truth- they are warmly attached to the minister and his ministry, and if attacked, will boldly defend both it and him. Their life is for the most part consistent, and their seat at church never vacant. They support the cause, when then can afford it, liberally and ungrudgingly; interest themselves and are often very useful in the Sunday School- take in and regularly read the "Standard," and other religious books- have their private and family prayers, and rarely miss the prayer meeting. Besides this, on the strength of a few evidences, their general blameless character and conduct, and the standing which they have long maintained in the congregation, they have, perhaps, been received into the church, and have sufficient light and knowledge of the things of God to maintain in it a creditable and what is called honorable position. And yet with all this, which looks so well and promising outwardly, there is that lacking inwardly without which the whole of their profession is vain. Here is the fatal secret. It may be all summed up in one short sentence. They are destitute of divine life. And thus their religion is that of a bell or a bugle- "a thing without life giving sound," a mere noise, a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

With all their profession, all their good qualities, their amiableness, their consistency, their liberality, their support of the cause, their zealous attendance on the means, and their many excellent points, for which we cannot but esteem and admire them, they fall short in that very thing which to have is eternal bliss, and which to lack is everlasting woe. The Holy Spirit has never quickened or regenerated their souls. They have everything but the one thing, lacking which they lack everything worth having, and possess nothing worth possessing; and thus as dead before God are as far from the kingdom of heaven in present grace and future glory as the swearer or the drunkard.

Our language may seem harsh; but we would confidently appeal to your own experience and judgment, you who know divine realities by divine teaching, whether our description is not true, and whether you yourself, in your inmost mind, do not feel that you can at this moment lay your hands on several, if not many, to whom it applies to the very letter. But what pulpit, what book warns such as these against the perils of their present profession? We see them everywhere in our chapels, forming, perhaps, a large part of the congregation, sheltering themselves under a sound doctrinal ministry; and yet it cannot escape the notice of any discerning eye that they are, at present at least, out of the secret of vital godliness. Indeed,

some of them are sufficiently honest to acknowledge it.

But how often do we find a ministry which refuses them shelter under its wings, which deals honestly and faithfully with their case, which seeks to fasten a word of conviction on their consciences, and to drive them out of all false refuges? "We must not cast down or distress the little ones," would be, probably, the answer to our charge. "If we were to be always as you, perhaps, would have us, warning our hearers against self-deception, and pointing out how far a person might go in religion and yet be nothing, we would make 'the heart of the righteous sad,' and discourage the lambs. We are bidden to preach the gospel, and comfort the people of God. If any others take comfort to whom it does not belong, that is not our fault." But is faithfulness no part of your ministry? Should you not by manifestation of the truth commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God? If you warn the sinner, should you not also warn the professor? You should not willingly deceive any- but may you not help many to deceive themselves?

But there may be a good reason, perhaps, for all this lack of faithfulness. Are you yourself ever exercised about your own state and standing? Are you ever tried in your own soul about the reality of your own religion? Do you ever fear whether you may not be deceived yourself? Are you never cast down or exercised by the deficiency that you find in yourself of gospel grace and gospel fruit? Do you never see and feel in your own case how far you might go as a preacher, and an earnest, accepted, and, perhaps, popular preacher too, and yet in the end fall short of eternal life? Perhaps were you more exercised yourself upon your own religion, it would add point and edge to your ministry in this very important particular. You would not let people off, nor let them in so easily. You would not allow them to shelter themselves so quietly under your ministry, or slip into the church with so little difficulty.

Nor is your objection of much weight, if of any, that you would distress the 'little ones' if your ministry were more searching. Allow that a little more point and edge sharpened up your ministry, and that a few pinches of fresh salt added to it made some sore consciences smart, and some wounds more acutely sting, would that impair its efficiency, or diminish its value and acceptability to the family of God? Some who had been slightly healed might cry out as the old wound was ripped open, and some of the timid and tried might quake and tremble with fear; but would that hurt the one or the other? Your keen, sharp strokes would not hurt or even touch the life of God in their soul, but would bring it more to light by cutting away its fleshy surroundings. You had better send the little ones groaning home than rejoicing in a false peace. They will have to groan and sigh more than ever you can make them do, before they will get what they need, and without which they will never be satisfied.

And surely there never was a day when a searching, discriminating ministry was more needed, and, we may add, more generally opposed. But the more it is kicked at, condemned, and cried down as legal, the more it shows the necessity there is for it. Let us seek, indeed, to remove from it every just ground of blame. The warning voice need not, indeed should not, be mingled with any bitterness, harshness, censoriousness, cutting words, or violent expressions. Some seem to think there can be no faithfulness without harshness or violence. But this is a mistake in the opposite extreme. The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. Anger and harshness, wrath and bitterness, sneers and irony, attacks on character, and imputations of motive, names and places, direct or unmistakable allusions, are all foreign to the whole character and spirit of the gospel.

Love to the souls of men, tenderness and kindness of manner and expression, earnest desires for the word to be received in a spirit of affection, pressing point after point home on the conscience firmly and yet gently, so handling the knife that while it cuts out every diseased part it leaves the healthy and the sound

part uninjured and even benefitted; an unwillingness to inflict too much pain, yet a fixed determination to do what is to be done thoroughly and unflinchingly- such and other marks will show the workman who rightly divides the word of truth, and takes forth the precious from the vile.

But the question may spring up in the mind of some of our readers- "This may be all very true and very good, but what has it to do with the Annual Address?" May we not in our turn ask- "Are not these thoughts, these exercises, these inquiries suitable to the present occasion?" The commencement of a New Year forms, as it were, a suitable standpoint whence to look back as well as look forward, to look without as well as within, at ourselves and at others, and take a general survey of the church and the world. We have just emerged out of the year that is gone and stand on the threshold of that which is come. Past, present, and future we may scan with rapid glance. Few who have any serious, solemn thoughts about eternity; few whose religion is a reality, and not a mere name or notion; few who live in some habitual thought of the presence and power of God; few whose hearts have been touched by his finger and thus made tender before him, pass by the first day of the year without some spiritual acknowledgment of it.

In their secret approaches to the throne, in their family worship, at various moments through the day, the commencement of the New Year will be a subject of prayer or meditation with many who fear God, and yet who would abstain from any legal or superstitious observance of days and months, and times and years. Why should not, then, we embrace the opportunity afforded us by our Annual Address to look back as well as forward, without as well as within, to the state of the churches as well as the state of our own souls? We are not ever to be treading the wheel or tugging at the oar of this world. There is something higher and holier to be attended to, something to engage our earnest thoughts, anxious cares, and warmest affections besides and beyond the shop or the farm, the counter or the counting-house, the bench and the loom, the wife and the children, the cupboard and the pantry, the sweat of the brow or the toil of the brain. We boast of our freedom; but what is our freedom worth if we can never get our neck from under the chain of business, and may never indulge ourselves with some quiet rest from life's carking cares and this world's gnawing anxieties?

God has mercifully given us a day in every week on which to rest and pause amid the cares, the business, and the whirl of life. Well may we say that God has given it us, for such a boon to man and beast never would have been either given or taken by man. And thankfully do we accept what he has graciously given. But for the ever-recurring Lord's Day, but for the rest of body and soul then given, but for the services of the sanctuary, the assembling of ourselves in the house of prayer, the blessedness of a preached gospel, and the revival of our spirit under these means of grace, how soon would we become as if crusted over with a thick coat of carnality and worldliness. But as a soiled dove escapes to some quiet and secluded spot where she may bathe her plumage in the rivulet, preen her wings, and regain what she has lost in the smoky town, of her purity and strength; so the soul, soiled with the dust and smoke of the week, gladly embraces the Lord's Day with its rest and quiet, that it may bathe itself once more in the fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness, renew its strength, and enjoy some of those gracious revivings of faith and love whereby it may mount upward in heart and affection to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God.

If circumstances admit, why, then, should not we take the opportunity of the new-born year to gather up our thoughts from the din and the dust of life? Under the old dispensation, the commencement of the civil year (for the Hebrews had a sacred or ecclesiastical year beginning at a different period) was celebrated by the blowing of trumpets, and was, therefore, called "the Feast of Trumpets." The first two days of the year were kept with peculiar solemnity. There was to be a holy convocation, or a calling of the people together, a complete cessation from all servile work, and particular sacrifices to be offered. (Lev. 23:24,

25; Num. 29:1-6.) God would not allow them to enter upon the new year without some solemn reference to his service and worship. They were a holy people, separated from all the nations of the earth as the Lord's peculiar treasure, and they were to be perpetually reminded of the presence of God in their midst as their special privilege and happiness. They were not then to commence the year for themselves, but for God. The silver trumpets blowing through the camp aroused their sleeping bodies, and called up their listless minds to remember that they were about to enter upon a new year. On that day they met together in holy convocation; on that day all servile work was laid aside; on that day the burnt offering sent forth its sweet savor unto the Lord, the meat offering of flour mingled with oil was presented, and the sin-offering slain to make atonement.

Is there not some instruction couched for us in all this? And may we not enter upon the new year with some sense of the gracious hand which has led us through the past, and on which we desire to lean, that it may guide us safely through the present?

We know not what the present year may bring forth, either as regards our private or public interests. We seem on the eve of important events, if not of troublous times; and we know not how far they may personally affect us. The past has been a most eventful year. The very visible heavens have themselves seemed almost out of course. Our cattle have been afflicted with a mysterious and most fatal disease, of an infection unparalleled for subtlety of communication, and great losses have been sustained. Nor has the danger ceased, for though mercifully much mitigated, the disease still lingers in our coasts, and breaks out in different places, to show that the Lord's out-stretched hand still hangs over us. Cholera has swept away its thousands in the eastern part of the metropolis, and heavily visited other parts of the land. The crops, when ready for harvesting, were ruined in the field by a continuance of drenching showers- and the potato disease, in more than its usual virulence, has much added to the calamity. In the north, heavy floods have destroyed much valuable property, and been attended with sad loss of life. The oldest of us can scarcely remember such a storm as fell on the commercial world on that Black Friday, (May 11th) when the great discount house, which was popularly supposed to be as firm as the Bank of England, stopped payment. The crushing weight with which the general collapse of credit fell on other houses, and the far-reaching calamity which spread, in consequence, all through the country can never be fully known; for in these commercial disasters, though the rich seem most to suffer, yet the shock, as in an earthquake, reaches all classes, and spreads itself through the whole of society in the waste of capital, the diminishing of credit, the dearness of money, the breaking of contracts, the suspension of great projects, the throwing out of employment of large masses of the laboring population, and the general depreciation of property. Directly or indirectly, therefore, all suffer under these revulsions. When, too, as in the past year, such heavy blows fall simultaneously on the agricultural and commercial world, the disaster becomes intensified; and we doubt not that many of our readers, in one or other of these large interests, have had a bitter taste of the losses of 1866, and enter with crippled resources on 1867.

What an eventful year has it also been on the Continent. Events now pass so rapidly before our eyes that, as in traveling by rail, the scene is all come and gone before we can gather up its character or fully understand its features. One campaign sufficed to lay prostrate in the dust one of the greatest powers of Europe- the Austrian Empire, and thereby to accomplish two results, both of which at one time seemed a visionary and hopeless dream- a free Italy and a united Germany. Pent up in our little Isle, we think little of the struggles and sorrows of the Continent. Twenty-five million Italians and sixty million Germans are to us but drops and units. The grinding tyranny of Austria in Italy, its firm support of all the iniquities of the Papacy, and its stern, cruel repression of all civil and religious liberty, as it little concerned us, we seemed

little to think about or care for. We who cannot bear a thread to tie our own hands, can look and see other nations bound hand and foot with comparative indifference. It would be out of place to dwell at any length on this subject, but we cannot forbear remarking that two more important events could scarcely signalize any one year. Italy is now free to the Adriatic. The last Austrian soldier has left Venice, the last French Zouave has left Rome. For the first time since A.D. 1494, when the French king, Charles VIII, crossed the Alps and entered Florence and Rome in triumph, the soil of Italy is untouched by the foot of a foreign soldier. Italy, under French or German yoke for more than three centuries and a half, is now free from sea to sea and shore to shore. But with freedom to Italy comes the downfall of oppression, both civil and religious. The temporal power of the Papacy has already virtually, if not actually, fallen. The year 1866 has seen what prophecy, according to most interpreters, has long pointed to- a fatal blow at the usurped power enthroned on the City of Seven Hills. Rome has now virtually changed its sovereign and belongs to Italy, not to the Pope. What is hidden in the mystic womb of time, what great issues will flow from this mighty revolution, none can foresee- but we may be sure that matters will not end here. We have elsewhere expressed our opinion that the downfall of the Pope's temporal power does not involve any diminishing of his spiritual authority, and indeed may only for a time increase it. But the blow which God has struck at the Pope's temporal power is a pledge, and perhaps a beginning of the blow which, in his own time, he will deal at his spiritual. The spiritual power and authority of the Papacy may rise to a great height; and in this country, as so many good men have predicted, it may yet establish for a short time its throne. But Babylon is already judged. Her day will come, and all her pride, her pomp, and her power, and all who rejoice in it, will go down into the pit.

We have given our pen a somewhat loose rein, but standing on the edge of the year now come, we could not but cast a glance over that which is gone, particularly as it will be an epoch memorable to the end of the world. Nor are we so shut up within the bounds of our red covers as never to take a look at the outer world. We are still in it, though we hope not of it, and may consistently watch and trace the hand of God in the great movements to which we have already alluded, as well as in those minute matters which more nearly concern us in providence and grace.

But now let us look forward as well as backward. The year before our eyes may hold in its bosom events which may deeply concern us, and affect us more sensibly than those of that which is past. We know what is past, but we know not what is to come. What personal, what family, what providential trials may await us, we know not. Sickness may attack our bodies, death enter our families, difficulties beset our circumstances, trials and temptations exercise our minds, snares entangle our feet, and many dark and gloomy clouds make our path one of heaviness and sorrow. Every year hitherto has brought its trials in its train; and how can we expect the present to be exempt?

What then? Shall we sit down and wring our hands at the prospect of anticipated trials? Shall we go forward to meet them, or wait until they meet us? Anticipation is often worse than the reality, and for this simple reason, that no strength or support is either promised or given for trials of our own forecasting. "As your days," (not "as your fears,") "so shall your strength be." "Hitherto," said Samuel, "has the Lord helped us;" but the Ebenezer ("the stone of help") was the memorial of a battle won, not of a battle in prospect. The well-known and often-sung lines,

"He that has helped me hitherto,

Will help me all my journey through,"

well express the hope and confidence of a believing heart. If, indeed, we are his, whatever our trials may be, his grace will be sufficient for us. He who has delivered, can and will deliver; and he who has brought us thus far on the road, who has so borne with our crooked manners in the wilderness, and never yet forsaken us, though we have so often forsaken him, will still, we trust, lead us along; will still guide and guard us, and be our God, our Father, and our Friend, not only to the end of the year, if spared to see it, but to the end of our life.

May he bring us very near to himself; may his fear be ever alive in our heart; may he hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not; may he keep us from evil, that it may not grieve us; and may he constrain us, by every constraint of his dying love, to live to his praise, that we may glorify him in our body and spirit, which are his. Blessed with his presence, we need fear no ill; favored with his smile, we need dread no foe; upheld by his power, we need shrink from no trial; strengthened by his grace, we need apprehend no suffering.

Knowing what we are and have been when left to ourselves, the slips that we have made, the snares that we have been entangled in, the shame and sorrow that we have procured to ourselves, well may we dread to go forth on this year alone; well may we say, "If you don't go with us, how will anyone ever know that your people and I have found favor with you? How else will they know we are special and distinct from all other people on the earth?" (Exod. 33:16.) May we be thus manifested as those who have found grace in the Lord's sight; and as a peculiar people, zealous for good works, may we be separated from all the people, profane or professing, who think and act otherwise, that are upon the face of the earth.

Such is the desire and prayer for himself and for every one of his gracious readers, of their affectionate Friend and Servant,

The Editor

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