

CROWNING BLESSINGS ASCRIBED TO GOD NO. 1475

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 18, 1879,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*(The second sermon in commemoration of the completion of 25 years of his Ministry
in the midst of the church assembling in the Tabernacle).*

*“You crown the year with Your goodness.”
Psalm 65:11.*

GODLY men in olden times felt God to be very near them and they attributed everything they saw in nature to the direct operation of His hand. They were not accustomed to speak of “the laws of matter,” “the operation of natural forces” and “the outcome of diverse causes” but they thought more of the First Cause, the foundation and pillar of all existence—and they saw Him at work on all sides. Hear how the Psalmist sings, “You make the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. You visit the earth and water it. You prepare them corn when you have so provided for it. You water the ridges thereof abundantly; you settle the furrows thereof: you make it soft with showers; you bless the springing thereof. You crown the year with Your goodness.” God was very near in those days. As Herbert says—

*“One might have sought and found You presently
At some fair oak, or bush, or cave, or well.”*

If the result of our philosophy has been to put God farther off from the consciousness of His creatures, God save us from such philosophy and let us get back again into the simple state in which we were children at home and God, our great Father, worked all things for us. Let us note the distinct mention of God throughout the psalm, for it is well worthy of notice, and let our speech be more after the olden sort—with less of our supposed knowledge in it and a good deal more concerning the presence and the goodness of God.

I am not about to use our text in reference to the outside world and to the husbandry of man, but we shall see how true it is within the church, which is the husbandry of God. The language was meant to describe the field of nature, but it is equally true of the garden of the church.

I am going to use the text in this way because of the peculiar circumstances under which we meet, celebrating, as we do, the 25th year of our happy union together as pastor and flock—a period which has, to the fullest extent been crowned with the goodness of the Lord. If I use the text for spiritual purposes I shall not err, for there is always a most striking analogy between the world of grace and the world of nature so that it would be hard to find anything said by inspiration concerning the visible world which might not be correctly spoken with regard to the spiritual world. But I do not depend upon that fact for my justification—I refer you to the psalm itself. It is clear that it was written to praise God, not alone for His works in the harvest field and abroad upon the sea, but for His wonderful goodness towards His people, for thus the psalm begins, “Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion.” It is Zion’s hymn which lies before us and therefore the church which Zion represented may well appropriate the language and use it for herself and say concerning all the Lord’s mercy to her in her plowing, her sowing, her watching, and the glad harvest of her spiritual husbandry, “You crown the year with Your goodness.” The spirit of the text is joyful gratitude and my soul is so filled therewith that I do not want so much to preach to you as to lead you in holy adoration of God for the great mercies with which He has surrounded us as a church and congregation from the first day even until now.

I. And so our first head is DIVINE GOODNESS ADORED. “You crown the year with Your goodness.”

Whatever of acceptable service we have rendered and whatever of real success we have achieved has come from the Lord of hosts who has worked all our works in us. Whatever holy results may have followed from earnest efforts and whatever honor has redounded unto God from them is the Lord’s doings

and it is marvelous in our eyes. “Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name be glory for Your mercy and for Your truth’s sake.” Your goodness, not ours, has crowned the work. Your goodness, indeed, it is which makes every good work good and gives to every good its crown. From its first conception, even to its ultimate conclusion, all virtue is of You. From blade to full corn, all the harvest is of You, O Lord, and to You let it be ascribed. Let us, therefore, praise the Lord with all our hearts for 25 years of prayer and effort, of planning and working, of believing and rejoicing which He has crowned with His goodness.

We will try to follow the run of the psalm and our first note shall be this—*praise must be for God alone*. “Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion.” Not for men, nor for priests, nor for pastors, presbyters, bishops, ministers, or whatsoever you choose to call them—“Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion.” Whosoever shall have done well in the midst of the church, let him have the love of his brethren, but let all the praise be unto You, O Most High. Far be it for the axe to exalt itself and forget him that fells therewith or for the sword to deprive the conqueror of his glory. Praise is silent while the best of men are passing by—it lays its finger on its lips till the Lord approaches and then bursts forth in gladsome song because *He* appears.

Whatever else you do, my brethren, be sure that your soul magnifies the Lord and abhors the very idea of self-glorification. If the Lord has blessed you, shake off, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand, any idea of ascribing praise to yourself. We are mere vanity and to us belong shame and confusion of face—these are, so to speak, our belongings—the only dowry our fathers have left to us. What are we that the Lord should bless us? Did you bring a soul to Christ the other day? Bless the Holy Spirit who helped you by His power to do so divine a deed. Did you bear bold testimony for the truth but yesterday? Bless Him who is the faithful and true witness, that at His feet you learned how to be true—and by His Spirit were enabled to be brave. “Not unto us! Not unto us!” With vehemence we deprecate the idea of honoring ourselves. Again and again we put away the usurper’s crown which Satan proffers us. How can we endure the base proposal? Shall we rob God of His glory? Even He from whom we derive our very existence? Perish, O pride, abhorred of God and man. O Lord, keep me from the approach of that shameful evil. Brethren, if you have any esteem among men, cast your crown at Jehovah’s feet and there let it be. All honor be to God only.

In this spirit, every action of the Christian church ought to be done, for what says the second clause of the psalm? “Unto You shall the vow be performed.” Brothers and sisters, we ought to praise God in all that we do by doing it to His praise. There must be no motive of this kind, “I must give because others give. I must attend at such-and-such a meeting because otherwise I should be missed.” Cast away from you, I pray you, the service of any master but your Lord in heaven, for you cannot serve two masters. Honor the Lord in all that you do. Whether you teach the classes of the school or preach at the corner of the street or hand a tract to a passerby or preach to the multitude, let the vow be performed as unto the Lord. It is wonderful how sweet it is to do service when it is expressly done *to Him*. I do not marvel that the woman broke the alabaster box *over Him*. Breaking precious boxes and spilling priceless nard may be hard work of itself to selfish flesh and blood, but it becomes a self-gratifying luxury to do it *unto Him*. When our whole life shall be doing service unto the Well-Beloved whom to serve is honor and delight and for whom to die were a bliss unspeakable—then shall we have learned how to live. Lord, You crown the year with Your goodness and therefore we would do all things as unto You, expecting Your grace to assist our service, Your love to accept it, Your pity to forgive it, and Your power to make it effectual to Your own glory. Oh, that I had but power—and God the Holy Spirit has that power—first to take away from each of us all thought of self-glorification. And then to consecrate our entire being, even to our pulse and breath, to His praise whose love has made us what we are!

Further, brethren, in praising God we may be helped to do so and to see how He crowns the year with His goodness when we *remember our answered prayers as a church*. What says the second verse? “O You that hears prayer, unto You shall all flesh come.” I say it and there is no boasting in the saying of it, but there is a glorying in God that prayers have been heard which have been put up by this church in ways and manners which have not been less than marvelous. Such of you as have been with us from the beginning will remember times when, in our weakness and in our poverty, we cried to the Lord for help because of our need—and He heard us. Especially was this the case concerning the building of the house in which we are now assembled. Ah, how speedily He helped us! How liberally! How like a God!

When we have needed means to feed the children of our Orphanage, the prayer meeting on Monday night has been followed by a response before the week has gone round. When two or three of us have met together, unknown to all the rest, to lay special siege to heaven upon the appearance of troubles which we did not wish to tell to others, we have seen the arm of God made bare among us and we could no more doubt it than we could doubt our own existence. Oh, you that have had your prayers answered, praise the Lord who crowns your supplications with His acceptance. Remember that it is because of prayer that, as a church, we have continued to advance from strength to strength—and shall not our praises balance our prayers? If the Lord gives goodness, shall not we give gratitude? Our prayers confessed our dependence—we felt that our years could never be crowned unless the Lord crowned them—and now that the blessing has come, let our praises prove our thankfulness while we cry, “You crown the years with your goodness.”

And, beloved friends, it may greatly increase our praise of God for all His goodness if we *think of our many sins*. Have we tried to serve Him? Alas, how often have we failed. The iniquities of our holy things might long ago have provoked the Lord to wrath. Among us has there not been much that His pure and holy eyes must have grieved over? The watchers of the church have sometimes come together in sore dismay over this and that which they have seen among the brotherhood and they have cried to God that He would put away the evil thing from among us or help us to overcome the evil one and reclaim the wandering. Nobody knows but God all the cares and anxieties which surround those that watch over such a flock as this. Who is sufficient for these things? Have we been made sufficient? Then infinite grace has done the deed. The best of us, whoever they may be, will be the first to bow before the Lord. And those among us who have exhibited a Christly character and have served the cause of Christ heartily will the most deeply feel that if the Lord had taken the candlestick out of its place and left us in the darkness, we had well deserved it. Eternally blessed be the name of the Ever Merciful. When we have sinned, we have always had an Advocate before the throne and the blood of sprinkling has ever been upon us to make us clean in the sight of the Lord. Blessed be His name, though iniquities prevail against us, yet as for our transgressions, He has purged them away and still does His church lift up her face and live in the smile of His love, rejoicing and triumphant. Beloved, this ought to make us praise God with all our hearts and the psalmist manifested the wisdom of inspiration in reminding us of it.

And once more, the *sacred privileges which infinite mercy has bestowed* upon us should compel us with glad alacrity to magnify the name of God. See how the psalm proceeds! “Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach unto You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, even of Your holy temple.” Many now present first learned in this house their election of God, for here they were called by almighty grace and enabled to approach their heavenly Father. Blessed be the choosing and calling Lord who now gives us access to Himself and nearness to His person. Do you remember when you first drew near to Him with weeping eyes and melting hearts because His love had broken down your rebellious wills? Oh, it was a sorrowful coming, but it was a true coming, for God was calling you. And do you remember afterwards, when you came to Him with glad hearts and rejoicing eyes, for the Lord had put away your sin and you stood “accepted in the Beloved”? Oh, that glad day! Last Sunday we sang, “Happy day, happy day.”

And we may sing it every day and every morning and evening of our lives and not sing it too often. The Lord who chose us and called us and made us to approach Him has not since become our enemy, for He has allowed us ever since to dwell in His house. We are His children. We have not called upon Him like strangers, but we have dwelt in His house as sons and daughters. He has been abiding with us and we have been made to abide in Him. Shall we not praise Him for this? This very house of prayer has been to some of you a quiet resting place. You have been more at home here than when you have been at home. I will be bound to say that you recollect more happy times that you have had here than anywhere else—and these have put out of your memory the sad records of your hard battling in the world, even for a livelihood. I know that many of you live by your Sabbaths. You step over the intervening space from Lord’s-Day to Lord’s-Day as if the Lord had made a ladder of Sabbaths for you to climb to heaven by. And you have been fed in the Lord’s house as well as rested. I know you have, for he who deals out the meat has been fed himself and when he is fed, he knows that others have like appetites and need like food and know when they get it. You have clapped your hands for very joy when redeeming grace and dying love have been the theme and infinite, sovereign, changeless mercy has been the subject of the

discourse. Well now, by every happy Sabbath you have had, my brethren, by every holy Monday evening's prayer meeting, by every occasion on which God has met with you in any of the rooms of this building when a few of you at early morning or late in the evening have met together for prayer, by every time in which the visits of Jesus' love have charmed your soul up to heaven's gate, bless and magnify His name who has crowned the years with His goodness. There had been no food for us if the Lord had not given us manna from heaven. There had been no comfortable rest for us if He had not breathed peace upon us. There had been no coming in of new converts, nor going out with rapturous joy of the perfected ones up to the seats above if the Lord had not been with us and therefore to Him be all the praise.

I do not suppose that any stranger here will understand this matter. It may even be that such will judge that we are indulging in self-acclamation under a thin disguise—but this evil we must endure for once. You, my brothers and sisters, who have been together these many years, know what is meant and you know that it is not within the compass of an angel's tongue to express the gratitude which many of us feel who for these 25 years have been banded together in closest and heartiest Christian brotherhood in the service of our Lord and Master.

Strangers cannot guess how happy has been our fellowship or how true our love. Eternity alone shall reveal the multitude of mercies with which God has visited us by means of our association in this church. It is to some of us friend, nurse, mother, and home all in one. If we sing more heartily about ourselves as recipients of divine mercy than some might think comely, we can only say that we cannot help it. If you drop in at a marriage and there is much said at the wedding feast about the family and its history, you need not go and put it in the papers, nor even criticize the family greetings too closely. Very likely they do seem to look too exclusively at home affairs, but pardon them for once. Well, whether men forgive me or not, I must and will speak, but all I have to say is to ascribe every good thing unto the Lord alone, even to the God of Abraham, "the God of the whole earth shall He be called."

II. Now we will turn to a second point. In the second place, **THE ENCIRCLING BLESSING OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS IS TO BE CONFESSED.** The Psalmist sings, "You crown the year with Your goodness." As though God circled the year and put a coronet about its head—a gem for every month, a pearl for every day—a matchless crown of unceasing goodness which surrounds the whole year! Now I venture to say that the period of 25 years, or a whole quarter of a century, wears its royal crown even more conspicuously than any single year. From the first day even until now God has enclosed the whole time with His goodness. I make no exception. We had a dark day once, when we were scattered with sorrow, but as I read the fifth verse of the psalm, it is easy to work it into our praise—"By terrible things in righteousness will you answer us, O God of our salvation." Standing happily among you, addressing you in this calm and quiet manner, recall that night in which the multitude seemed to be taken with sudden panic and to rush madly from the house—and then we heard of dead and wounded in our congregation—and the preacher's heart was broken till he felt it would be well to die. Yet out of that calamity, with all its unspeakable grief, there sprang a blessing, the fruit of which we have continued still to reap. Yes, I make no exception to anything. Sick and ill oftentimes has the preacher been, but valued lessons have thus been taught to him and through him taught to the people. Sickness has fallen here and there and sometimes affliction and poverty—but you have, all of you, learned something under the rod and you have blessed God for His fatherly discipline filled with eternal benefit. Yes, Lord, it is true in our case, "You crown the year with Your goodness."

Now, let us just look at this all-encircling goodness of the Lord which we have seen from the first day till now.

I saw it, first of all, in inspiring the few brethren that met together as a church with confidence in God at the very outset. Our first meeting for prayer was, I think, more largely attended than our first sermon. The church was diminished and brought low, but the brethren prayed with great reliance upon God and showed no sign of distrust. They did not say, "Die." They did not believe in becoming extinct, but every man seemed resolved to set his face like a flint, to win prosperity at the hands of God—and for this I thank *Him*. Is He not said in our psalm to be the confidence of the ends of the earth? This confidence was the beginning of an endless chain of goodness. Then the Lord was pleased in infinite mercy to prepare men's hearts to hear the gospel. It was not possible, they said, that great places could be filled with crowds to hear the old-fashioned gospel. The pulpit had lost its power, so unbelievers told us, and

yet no sooner did we begin to preach in simple strains the gospel of Christ, then the people flew as a cloud and as doves to their windows. And what listening there was at Park Street, where we scarcely had air enough to breathe! And when we got into the larger place, what attention was manifest! What power seemed to go with every word that was spoken. I say it, though I was the preacher, for it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me. There were stricken down among us some of the most unlikely ones. There were brought into the church and added to God's people some of those that had wandered far away from the path of truth and righteousness—and these, by their penitent love, quickened our life and increased our zeal. The Lord gave the people more and more a willingness to hear and there was no pause in the flowing stream of hearers, nor in the incoming of converts. The Holy Spirit came down like showers which saturate the soil till the clods are ready for the breaking. And then it was not long before we heard on the right and on the left the cry, "What must we do to be saved?" We were busy enough in those days in seeing converts and thank God we have been ever since. We had some among us who gave themselves up to watch for the souls of men and we have a goodly number of such helpers now, perhaps more than we ever had and thank God, these found and still find many souls to watch over. Still the arrows fly and still the smitten cry out for help and ask that they may be guided to the great healing Lord. Blessed be God's name for this. He went with us all those early days and gave us sheaves even at the first sowing, so that we began with mercy and He has been with us even until now—till our life has become one long harvest-home.

I am bound to acknowledge with deep thankfulness that during these 25 years the word has been given me to speak when the time has come for preaching. It may look to you a small thing that I should be able to come before you in due time, but it will not seem so to my brothers in the ministry who recollect that for 25 years my sermons have been printed as they have been delivered. It must be an easy thing to go and buy discourses at sixpence or a shilling—each ready lithographed—and read them off as hirelings do, but to speak your heart out every time and yet to have something fresh for 25 years is no child's play. Who shall do it unless he cries to God for help? I read but the other day a newspaper criticism upon myself in which the writer wondered that a man should keep on year after year with so few themes and such a narrow groove to travel in. But my brethren, it is not so. Our themes are infinite for number and fullness. Every text of Scripture is boundless in its meaning. We could preach from the Bible throughout eternity and not exhaust it. The groove narrows? The thoughts of God narrow? The divine word narrow? They know it not, for His commandment is exceeding broad. Had we to speak of politics or philosophy, we had run dry long ago—but when we have to preach the Savior's everlasting love—the theme is always fresh, always new. The incarnate God, the atoning blood, the risen Lord, the coming glory—these are subjects which defy exhaustion. Yet we bless the Eternal Spirit who gives both seed to the sower and bread to the eater, that we have had spiritual food for our people as often as the season has come round! I must render my special note and if at any time you have been blessed by the word I have spoken, you must render your tribute, too. All these years He has crowned us with His goodness by giving us the good Word to preach in His name.

But, dear brethren, I am most happy to thank God for crowning the years with His goodness by helping us in the reaping and gathering in of souls. I say, "us," advisedly. Here we have had a church which from the first began to seek the souls of men. If any of you do not work for Christ, I should think you have a hard time of it among us, for one or another is pretty sure to use the ox-goad upon you. Both by example and by precept and by the general spirit of the brotherhood, idlers stand rebuked. Our brethren and sisters from the first began working for the good of men as best they could. Not in a fine, artistic manner—I do not think we ever tried that—we did it in a very bland manner, but we went at it with all our hearts. Our young brethren tried their hands at teaching and preaching—very likely it was intellectually very poor preaching—but it was full of heart and it did good in spite of its imperfections. The teaching and the looking after converts, the trying to form new churches, the opening of prayer meetings, and all sorts of holy works were not done after any set fashion—but they were done somehow and often done with a desperate valor and a simple faith which surprised and cheered me. Often and often have I brushed the tears from my eyes when I have received from some here present offerings for the Master's work which utterly surpassed all my ideas of giving. The consecration of your substance by some among you has been apostolic. I have known those who have so given from their poverty that they have sometimes given all that they had—and when I have even hinted at their exceeding the bounds of prudence,

they have seemed hurt and pressed the gift again, for some other work of the Master whom they love. The Lord knows every one of your hearts—wherein you have come short He knows and may His grace forgive—but where, as I most honestly bear witness, many here have gone up to the measure of their ability and even beyond it, He knows and will reward. For your zeal, industry, and consecration I must bless the Lord who crowns the years with His goodness.

There are few among you, I should think, who have worked for the Master who have not seen most encouraging results in the conversions of those for whom you have cared. Certainly there are many among you between whom and myself there might pass a telegraphic glance awakening glad memories. You have brought to me one after another souls that you have won. You wanted me to speak to them personally because you have an idea that I might be tenderer than anybody else. I am afraid you think too highly of me in this respect. Still I have been right glad to see those you brought to me because they were your children. How glad I have been that, inasmuch as I brought you to Christ through His grace, when you have brought others to Christ I have seemed to be a sort of grandfather in your midst, rejoicing in your joy, triumphing in your success. And I mean it sincerely when I say that I look upon many of you with an intense love and satisfaction because God has made you great winners of souls. You have not sat here to listen to me and to enjoy your Sundays, but you have been sowers of the good seed. You have many times denied yourselves the privileges of God's house that you might go and look after others—and the Lord has given you your wages. How many you have brought back whose feet had almost gone! How many you have helped by sweet encouragement when they have been depressed! I know not all your labors of love, but God knows. This much I know, that the pastorate of this church is practically carried out by the church itself. Beloved elders labor with a diligence which I cannot too much commend, still it were impossible with 5,000 persons to care for, that a few men should fulfill the service. You watch over one another in the Lord and for this I bless Him, to whom must be rendered all the praise. I feel the more free to speak about what He has worked by you and in you because you will not take any glory to yourselves but lay it at His feet. Lord, You have blessed us exceedingly beyond what we asked or even thought—and in return we bless You! When I recollect how as a boy, I stood among you and feebly began to preach of Jesus Christ and how these 25 years without dissension, ay, without the dream of dissension, in perfect love compacted as one man, you have gone on from one work of God to another and have never halted, hesitated, or drawn back, I must and will bless and magnify Him who has crowned these years with His goodness.

III. Now I come to my closing point. It is this—THE CROWNING BLESSING IS CONFESSED TO BE OF God—not only the encircling blessing, but the crowning blessing. What is the crown of a church? Well, some churches have one crown and some another. I have heard of a church whose crown was its organ—the biggest organ, the finest organ ever played—and the choir the most wonderful choir that ever was. Everybody in the district said, “Now, if you want to go to a place where you will have fine music, that is the spot.” Our musical friends may wear that crown if they please. I will never pluck at it or decry it—I feel no temptation in that direction. I have heard of others whose crown has been their intellect. There are very few people indeed, not as many people by one-tenth as there are seats, but then they are such a select people, the *elite*, the thoughtful and intelligent! The ministry is such that only one in a hundred can possibly understand what is said and the one in the hundred who does understand it is, therefore, a most remarkable person. That is their crown. Again I say I will not envy it. Whatever there may be that is desirable about it, the brother who wears it shall wear it all his days for me. I have heard of other crowns—amongst the rest, that of being “a most respectable church.” All the people are respectable. The minister, of course, is respectable. I believe he is “Reverend” or “Very Reverend,” and everybody and thing about him is to the last degree “respectable.” Peasant jackets and cotton gowns are warned off by the surpassing dignity of everything in and around the place. As for a working man, such a creature is never seen on the premises and could not be supposed to be and if he were to come he would say, “The preacher preaches double Dutch or Greek, or something of the sort.” He would not hear language which he could understand. This is not a very brilliant crown, this crown of respectability—it certainly never flashed ambition into my soul. But our crown under God has been this—the poor have the gospel preached to them, souls are saved, and Christ is glorified. O my beloved church, hold fast what you have, that no man take this crown away from you! As for me, by God's help, the first and last thing that I long for is to bring men to Christ. I care nothing about fine language or about the pretty

speculations of prophecy or a hundred dainty things, but to break the heart and bind it up—to lay hold on a sheep of Christ and bring it back into the fold is the one thing I would live for. You also are of the same mind, are you not? Well, we have had this crowning blessing that, as nearly as I can estimate, more than 9,000 persons have joined this church. If they were all alive now or all with us now, what a company they would be. Some have fallen asleep and many are members with other churches, working for the Master where they are probably more influential than they could have been at home. Some of our members we were glad to lose because our loss was the gain of the universal church. We sent them out to colonize and so to increase the Master's kingdom. For these 9,000 and more let God be praised. It is a crown in which we must and will rejoice.

But another crown to any church, I think, is when its members are maintained in their profession. If many are added and then they are scattered again—if they do but come to go, if they are found and then straightway lost—what is the benefit of it? But this has been our crown of rejoicing, that we have seen the young converts matured in grace. The blade has become the ear and the ear has become the full corn in the ear, for which God is thanked. And there has been this about it, that as we built together as living stones, so we have remained together. I have a great many faults and I often wonder how it is you put up with me, but we have not thought of parting—the mortar which holds us together in the building is very binding. I am not so much surprised that I put up with you, for it is my duty and office to bear with all and none of you have caused me grief, except such as have walked unworthy and grieved the Spirit of God. We have gone on well together, under God's blessing these many years and have no hesitation about continuing in the same loving unity.

During these 25 years, I have had to attend to the quarrels and differences of scores of little churches where their weakness should have been the strongest argument for union. Men usually divide when they are already too few for the work and this is a most grievous evil under the sun. Churches torn apart with contention have laid the wretched differences before me and I have had many a heavy burden to carry while trying to set things right. But I have not had to spend one five minutes in seeking to heal a breach in this church or maintain its unity. The Lord has given us brotherly love and unto His name be praise. Brethren who have been members of other churches where you have seen trouble, you know what a comfort it is to be connected with a church where we endeavor to walk in love to one another and where the noise of war has not disturbed our gates. Truly I must say and I do say it, "O Lord, You give peace in our borders and You fill us with the finest of the wheat. You crown the years with Your goodness."

But is this all? We ought to bless God for the fruit-bearing ones that have been among us. Workers of all sorts are found for the different agencies of the church as they are required and God has given us some whom He has honored exceedingly, who are our strength for home work. But besides that, this church has this day an army of above 400 ministers trained at her side who are now scattered all over the globe preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, while as a militia we have some 80 or more disseminating godly books.

Best of all, we have a growing band of missionaries. My heart leaped within me on Monday night when I heard the young people and saw how one and another of our brethren were devoting themselves to mission work. This I reckon to be the brightest crown of all. If the Lord will but infuse the missionary spirit into us and force out many to go abroad to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ our cup will run over and we shall again have to say, "Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion, for You crown the years with your goodness."

Last of all, and never to be forgotten, during these 25 years there have gone from us to the upper realms about 800 who had named the name of Jesus. Professing their faith in Christ, living in His fear, dying in the faith, they gave us no cause to doubt their sincerity and therefore we may not question their eternal safety. Many of them gave us in life and in death all the tokens we could ask for of their being in Christ and therefore we sorrow not as those that are without hope. Why, when I think of them, many of them my sons and daughters now before the throne, they fill me with solemn exultation. Do you not see them in their white robes? Eight hundred souls redeemed by blood. These are only what we know of and had enrolled. How many there may have been converted here who never joined our earthly fellowship, but nevertheless, have gone home, I cannot tell. There probably have been more than those whose names we know, if we consider the wide area over which the printed sermons circulate. They are gathering home, one by one, one by one, but they make a goodly company. Our name is Gad, for "a troop comes."

Happy shall we be to overtake those who have marched out ahead of us and entered into the Promised Land before us. Let us remember them and by faith join our hands with them. Flash a thought to unite the broken family, for we are not far from them, nor are they far from us, since we are one in Christ. This too is our crown.

And now I want one thing more. There is such a thing as a greed that is never satisfied and I have a great greed upon me now. I frankly confess my covetousness. Whenever the Lord gives us any great spiritual gift we want more, nor are we blamed for this, but bidden to covet earnestly the best gifts. This, then, is my further desire. I should be rejoiced beyond measure if, on this night and during the next two or three days in which we keep holy day and bless the Lord for His goodness, some brethren were moved by the Holy Spirit to undertake some new work for Christ which they had not thought of before. Come, my brother, may the Lord crown this year this day with His goodness by putting it into your heart to break up new soil and sow a fresh field for Jesus. Have you been an idler? Buckle to! Today join the laborers and leave the loiterers. Get to the Master's work. Have you already been diligent? I have more hope in appealing to you.

Brother, Sister, try something more—something more tonight. Cast over in your mind what there is that is left undone in the branch of holy service for which you are fitted or for which you might get to be fitted and at once engage in it. Come now. Consecrate yourself to the Lord anew tonight and pray Him to lift you to a higher platform and into a nobler state of consecration. That would be a blessed crowning of the years with His goodness. And what if some young men here were to say, "We shall prosper in business, no doubt, for we feel up to the mark for it. God has given us brain and skill and a fair opening, but inasmuch as we have capacity we will consecrate it." I hear the sorrows of China borne on the wailing of the wind and the sighing of the sea! Millions upon millions are perishing for lack of knowledge—will no one pity them? The need of India's teeming population cries to us in voices which pierce the heart—will no one listen and help? A voice comes forth from the excellent glory, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" It were a crown to end the year with if there came from this and that set of useful, earnest Christian men the reply of individual hearts, "Here am I. Here am I. Send me." The Lord give us this crown.

One thing more. Oh, if some hearts would yield themselves to the Savior tonight. If some were converted tonight, what a crown that would be to finish up these years with. Testimonial, sirs? No testimonial can ever be given to the preacher which can equal a soul converted. These are the seals of our ministry and the wages of our hire. Socrates on his birthday had a present given him by each of his students. Some brought less and some brought more. Among the rest there was one who had nothing in the world to bring and so he came to Socrates and said, "Master, I give you myself. I love you with all my heart." The sage judged this to be the most precious of all the tributes. Will not some of you cry, "I do not know that I could be a missionary or that I have any gifts, or talents, or substance that I could contribute, but Lord, I give my heart to You to be renewed by grace"? God bring you, poor sinner, to Jesus' feet to surrender your whole nature to His sway that He may wash it in His blood, fill it with His Spirit, and use it for His glory. He says, "My son, give me your heart," and when the heart is yielded, He accepts the gift. May the Eternal Spirit lead many to give themselves thus to Jesus this night and it will be the crowning joy of all the years. Amen and amen.

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