

GOOD CHEER FOR THE NEW YEAR NO. 728

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 6, 1867,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.”
Deuteronomy 11:12.*

THE Israelites had sojourned for a while in Egypt, a land which only produces food for its inhabitants by the laborious process of irrigating its fields. They had mingled with the sons of Ham as they watched with anxious eyes the swelling of the river Nile; they had shared in the incessant labors by which the waters were preserved in reservoirs, and afterwards eked out by slow degrees to nourish the various crops. Moses tells them in this chapter that the land of Palestine was not at all like Egypt; it was a land which did not so much depend on the labor of the inhabitants as upon the good will of the God of heaven. He calls it a land of hills and valleys, a land of springs and rivers, a land dependent not upon the rivers of earth but upon the rain of heaven, and he styles it in conclusion, “A land which the Lord your God cares for: the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.”

Observe here a type of the condition of the natural and the spiritual man. In this world in temporals and in all other respects the merely carnal man has to be his own providence, and to look to himself for all his needs. Hence his cares are always many, and frequently they become so heavy that they drive him to desperation. He lives a life of care, anxiety, sorrow, fretfulness and disappointment; he dwells in Egypt, and he knows that there is no joy, or comfort, or provision if it does not wear out his soul in winning it. But the spiritual man dwells in another country; his faith makes him a citizen of another land. It is true he endures the same toils, and experiences the same afflictions as the ungodly, but they deal with him after another fashion, for they come as a gracious Father's appointments and they go at the bidding of loving wisdom. By faith the godly man casts his care upon God who cares for him, and he walks without worrying care because he knows himself to be the child of heaven's loving-kindness, for whom all things work together for good. God is his great guardian and friend, and all his concerns are safe in the hands of infinite grace. Even in the year of drought the believer dwells in green pastures, and lies down beside the still waters; but as for the ungodly, he abides in the wilderness and hears the mutterings of that curse, “Cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm: he shall be like the heath in the desert; he shall not see when good comes.”

Do you question my assertion, that Canaan is a fitting type of the present condition of the Christian? We have frequently insisted upon it that it is a far better type of the militant believer here than of the glorified saint in the New Jerusalem. Canaan is sometimes used by us in our hymns as the picture of heaven, but it is scarcely so; a moment's reflection will show that it is far more distinctly the picture of the present state of every believer. While we are under conviction of sin we are like Israel in the wilderness, we have no rest for the sole of our feet; but when we put our trust in Jesus we do as it were cross the river and leave the wilderness behind: “we who have believed do enter into rest,” for “there remains a rest for the people of God.” Believers have entered into the finished salvation which is provided for us in Christ Jesus. The blessings of our inheritance are in a great measure already in our possession; the state of salvation is no longer a land of promise, but it is a land possessed and enjoyed. We have peace with God; we are even now justified by faith. “Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God.” Covenant blessings are at this moment actually ours, just as the portions of the land of Canaan became actually in the possession of the various tribes. It is true there is an enemy in Canaan, an enemy to be driven out—indwelling sin, which is entrenched in our hearts as in walled cities, and fleshly lusts which are like the

chariots of iron with which we have to do war—but the land is ours; we have the covenanted heritage at this moment in our possession, and the foes who would rob us of it shall, by the sword of faith, and the weapon of all prayer, be utterly rooted out.

The Christian, like Israel in Canaan, is not under the government of Moses now; he has done with Moses once and for all. Moses was magnified and made honorable as he climbed to the top of the hill, and with a kiss from God's lips was carried into heaven. Even so the law has been magnified and made honorable in the person of Christ, but has ceased to reign over the believer; and as Joshua was the leader of the Israelites when they came into Canaan, so is Jesus our Leader now. He it is who leads us on from victory to victory, and He will not sheathe His sword till He has taken unto Himself, and given unto us His followers the full possession of all the holiness and happiness which covenant engagements have secured for us. For these and many other reasons it is clear that the children of Israel in Canaan were typically in the same condition as we are now who, having believed in Jesus, have our citizenship in heaven. Beloved, those of you who are in such a state will relish the text. It is to such persons that the text is addressed. The eyes of the Lord, your God, are always upon you, O believer, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year. You who trust in Jesus are under the guidance of the Great Joshua; you are fighting sin; you have obtained salvation; you have left the wilderness of conviction and fear behind you, come into the Canaan of faith, and now the eyes of God are upon you and upon your state from the opening of the year to its close. May the Holy Spirit bless us; and we shall, first, *take the text as we find it*; secondly, *we shall turn the text over*; thirdly, *we shall blot the text out*; and then, fourthly, *we shall distil practical lessons from the text*.

I. First, we will consider THE TEXT AS WE FIND IT. The first word that glitters before us, like a jewel in a crown, is that word "eyes." "The eyes of the Lord." What is meant here? Surely not mere omniscience. In that sense the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good. God sees Hagar as well as Sarah, and beholds Judas when he gives the traitorous kiss quite as surely as He beholds the holy woman when she washes the feet of the Savior with her tears. No, there is love in the text to sweeten observation. "The Lord knows the righteous" with a knowledge which is over and above that of omniscience; the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, not merely to see them, but to view them with complacency and delight; not merely observe them, but observes them with affectionate care and interest. The meaning of the text then is first, that *God's love is always upon His people*. Oh, Christians, think of this (it is rather to be thought of than to be spoken of), that God loves us! The big heart of Deity is set upon us poor, insignificant, undeserving, worthless beings. God loves us, loves us forever, never thinks of us without loving thoughts, never regards us, nor speaks of us, nor acts towards us except in love. God is love in a certain sense towards all, for He is full of benevolence to all His creatures; love is, indeed, His essence; but there is an unfathomable depth when that word is used in reference to His elect ones who are the objects of distinguishing grace, redeemed by blood, enfranchised by power, adopted by condescension, and preserved by faithfulness. beloved, do not ask me to speak of this love, but implore God the Holy Spirit to speak of it to your inmost souls. The loving eyes of God are always upon you, the poorest and most obscure of His people, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year.

The expression of the text teaches us that *the Lord takes a personal interest in us*. It is not here said that God loves us, and therefore sends an angel to protect and watch over us; but the Lord does it Himself. The eyes that observe us are God's own eyes, the guardian under whose protection we are placed is God Himself. Some mothers put out their children to nurse, but God never; all his babes hang upon His own breast, and are carried in His own arms. It is little that we could do if we had to perform everything personally, and therefore most of the things are done by proxy. The captain when the vessel is to be steered across the deep, must have his hour of sleep, and then the second in command, or some other, must manage the vessel; but you will observe that in times of emergency the captain is called up and takes upon himself personal responsibility. See him as he himself anxiously heaves the lead, and stands at the helm or at the look-out, for he can trust no one else in perilous moments. It seems from the text that it is always a time of emergency with God's people, for their great Lord always exercises a personal care over them. He has never said to His angels, "I will dispense with My own watching, and you shall

guard My saints,” but while He gives them charge concerning His people, yet He Himself is personally their keeper and their shield. “I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day.”

You have sometimes, when you have been very sick, sent for a physician, and it may be that he has been engaged somewhere else, but he has an assistant who probably is quite as skillful as himself, yet, as soon as that assistant comes, such has been your confidence in the man himself for whom you have sent that you feel quite disappointed; you wanted to see the man whom you had tried in days gone by. There is no fear of our being put off with any substitute for our God. Oh, beloved, when I think of the text, I feel of the same mind as Moses when God said, “I will send My angel before you.” “No,” Moses in effect said, “that will not suffice: if *Your presence* go not with us, carry us not up from here.” My Lord, I cannot be put off with Gabriel or Michael, I cannot be content with the brightest of the seraphs who stand before Your throne; it is Your presence I need, and blessed be Your name, it is Your presence which the text promises to give. The anxious mother is glad to have a careful nurse upon whom she may rely, but in the crisis of the disease when the little one’s life trembles in the balance, she says, “Nurse, I must sit up myself with the child tonight.” And though it is the third, perhaps the fourth night, since the mother has had sleep, yet her eyes will not close as long as the particular point of danger is still in view. See, my brothers and sisters, see the loving tenderness of our gracious God. Never, never, never, does He delegate to others, however good or kind, or to any secondary agents, however active or powerful, the care of His people; His own eyes, without a substitute, must watch over us.

Further, the text reminds us of *the unwearied power of God towards His people*. What? Can His eyes always be upon us? This would not be possible if He were not God. To be always upon one object, man can scarcely do that; but where there are ten thousand times ten thousand objects, how can the same eyes always be upon every one among so many! I know what unbelief has said to you. He has whispered, “He brings forth the stars, He calls them all by their names, how then can He notice so mean an insect as you are?” Then we have said, “My way is passed over from God: God has forgotten me; my God has forsaken me.” But here comes the text. Not only has He not forgotten you, but He has never *once* taken His eyes off you, and though you are one among so many, yet He has observed you as narrowly, as carefully, as tenderly as if there were not another child in the divine family, nor another one whose prayers were to be heard, or whose cares were to be relieved. What would you think of yourself if you knew that you were the only saved soul in the world, the only elect one of God, the only one purchased on the bloody tree? Why you would feel, “How God must care for me! How He must watch over me! Surely He will never take His eyes off such a special favorite.” And it is the same with you, beloved, though the family is so large, as if you were the only one. The eyes of the Lord never grow weary—He neither slumbers nor sleeps; both by day and night He observes each one of His people.

If you put these things together, intense affection, personal interest, unwearied power, and then if you remember that all this time God’s heart is actuated by unchanging purposes of divine grace towards you, surely there will be enough to make you lose yourself in wonder, love, and praise. You have sinned in the past of your history, but your sin has never made Him love you less because He never looked upon you as you are personally considered, naked, and abstract in yourself, but He saw you and loved you in Christ in the eternal purpose even when you were dead in trespasses and sins; He has seen you in Christ ever since, and has never ceased to love you. It is true you have been very faulty (what tears this ought to cost you!) but as He never loved you for your good works, He has never cast you away for your bad works, but has beheld you as washed in the atoning blood of Jesus till you are whiter than snow, and He has seen you clothed in the perfect righteousness of your Surety, and therefore looked upon you and regarded you as though you were without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Grace has always set you before the Lord’s eyes as being in His dear Son all fair and lovely—a pleasing prospect for Him to look upon. He has gazed upon you, beloved, but never with anger, looked upon you when your infirmities, no, your willful wickedness had made you hate yourself, and yet, though He has seen you in this doleful state, He had such a regard for your relationship to Christ that you have still been accepted in the beloved.

I wish it were in the power of mortal speech to convey the full glory of that thought, but it is not. You must eat this morsel alone; you must take it like a wafer made with honey and put it under your tongue, and suck the essential sweetness out of it. The eyes of God, *my* God, are always upon His chosen, as eyes of affection, delight, complacency, unwearied power, immutable wisdom, and unchanging love.

The next word that seems to flash and sparkle in the text is that word “ALWAYS.” “The eyes of the Lord are *always* upon it.” And it is added, as if that word were not enough for such dull ears as ours, “from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year.” This is so plain and pointed that we may not imagine that any one single day or hour of the day, or minute of the hour we are removed from the eyes or the heart of God. I tried to discover the other day what time there was in one’s life when one could best afford to be without God. Perhaps imagination suggests the time of prosperity, when business prospers, wealth is growing, and the mind is happy. Ah, beloved, to be without our God then, why it would be like the marriage feast without the bridegroom, it would be the day of delight and no delight, a sea and no water in it, day and no light. What? All these mercies and no God? Then there is only so much shell and no kernel, so much shadow and no substance. In the midst of such joys as earth can give in the absence of the Lord the soul can hear satanic laughter, for Satan laughs at the soul because it has tried to make the world its rest, and is sure to be deceived. Do without God in prosperity, beloved? We cannot, for then we should grow worldly, proud, careless, and deep damnation would be our lot. The Christian in prosperity is like a man standing on a pinnacle, he must then be divinely upheld or his fall will be terrible. If you can do without God at all, it certainly is not when you are standing on the pinnacle. What then? Could we do without Him in adversity? Ask the heart that is breaking! Ask the tortured spirit that has been deserted by its friend! Ask the child of poverty who has not where to lay his head! Ask the daughter of sickness, tossing by night and day on that uneasy bed, “Could you do without your God?” And the very thought causes wailing and gnashing of teeth. *With* God pain becomes pleasure, and dying beds are elevated into thrones, but *without* God—ah, what could we do? Well then, is there no period? Cannot the young Christian, full of freshness and vigor, elated with the novelty of piety, do without his God? Ah, poor puny thing, how can the lamb do without the shepherd to carry it in his arms? Cannot the man in middle life then, whose virtues have been confirmed, do without his God? He tells you that it is the day of battle with him, and that the darts fly so thick in business nowadays, that the burdens of life are so heavy in this age that without God a man in middle life is like a naked man in the midst of a thicket of briars and thorns—he cannot hope to make his way.

Ask yon gray beard with all the experience of 70 years, whether at least he has not attained to an independence of divine grace, and he will say to you that as the weakness and infirmity of the body press upon him it is his joy that his inner man is renewed day by day, but take away God, who is the spring of that renewal, and old age would be utter wretchedness. Ah, brothers and sisters, there is not a moment in any one day that you or I have ever lived, that we could have afforded to dispense with the help of God, for when we have thought ourselves strong, as, alas, we have been fools enough to think so, in five minutes we have done that which has cost us rivers of tears to undo; in an unguarded moment we have spoken a word which we could not recall, but which we would have recalled if we should have had to bite our tongues in halves to have had it unsaid. We have thought a thought when God has left us which has gone whizzing through our souls like a hellish thunderbolt making a fiery path along the spirit; we may well wonder how it is that the evil thought did not become a terrible act as it would have done if God whom we had forgotten had forgotten us. We need to set the Lord always before us. Let us then, when we wake in the morning, take this promise with us and say, Lord, You have said You will always be with us; then leave us not till the dews of evening fall, and we return to our couch; leave us not even when we are there, lest in the night temptation should be whispered in our ears and we should wake to defile our mind with unholiness. Leave us never, O our God, but always be our very present help! Last year was, perhaps, the gloomiest of our lives. All the newspaper summaries of 1866 are like the prophetic roll which was written within and without with lamentations. The year has gone, and everybody is glad to think that we have entered upon a new one; yet, who knows but what 1867 may be worse? Who

can tell? Well, brothers and sisters let it be what God chooses it shall be. Let it be what He appoints; for there is this comfort in the assurance that not a moment from this Sunday night on to December 31st, 1867, shall be without the tender care of heaven; not even for a second will the Lord remove His eyes from any of His people. Here is good cheer for us! We will march boldly into this wilderness, for the pillar of fire and cloud will never leave us; the manna will never cease to drop, and the rock that followed us will never cease to flow with living streams. Onward, onward, let us go, joyously confident in our God.

The next word that springs from the text is that great word JEHOVAH. It is a pity that our translators did not give us the names of God as they found them in the original. The word LORD in capitals is well enough, but that grand and glorious name of “Jehovah” should have been retained. In this case we read, “The eyes of Jehovah are always upon it.” He who surveys us with love and care is none other than the one and indivisible God, so that we may conclude if we have His eyes to view us we have His heart to love us, and if we have His heart we have His wings to cover us, we have His hands to bear us up; we have the everlasting arms to be underneath us, we have all the attributes of Deity at our command. Oh, Christian, when God says that He always looks at you, He means this, that He is always yours; there is nothing which is necessary for you which He will refuse to do; there is no wisdom stored up in Him which He will not use for you, there is no one attribute of all that great mass of splendor which makes up the Deity which shall be withheld from you in any measure, but all that God is shall be yours. He shall be your God forever and ever. He will give you grace and glory, and be your guide even unto death.

Perhaps the sweetest word of the text is that next one—the eyes of Jehovah “YOUR GOD.” Ah, there is a blessed secret! Why? Ours in covenant; our God, for He chose us to be *His* portion; and by His grace He has made us choose Him to be *our* portion. We are His and He is ours—

*“So I my best Beloved’s am,
So He is mine.”*

“Your God.” Blessed be the Lord, we have learned to view Him not as another man’s God but as our God. Christian, can you claim God this day? Has your hand by faith grasped Him? Has your heart by love twisted its tendrils round Him? Do you feel Him to be the greatest possession that you have, that all creatures are but a dream, an empty show, but that God is your substantial treasure; your all in all? Oh then it is not an absolute God whose eyes are upon you, but God in covenant relationship regards you. “Your God.” What a word is this! He who is watching me is my Shepherd; He who cares for me is my Father; not my God alone by way of power, but my Father by way of relationship; One who though He is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet deigned to visit this poor earth robed in mortal flesh that He might become like we are, and He is now our God, the God of His people by near and dear relationship. In ties of blood Jesus is one with sinners, our husband, our head, our all in all, and we are His fullness, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Thus the eyes of God, as the covenant God of Israel, are upon His people from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

I must now leave the text to talk to you alone by itself. Much more may be said, but better unsaid by me, if you let the text say it to you. Talk to the text, I pray you, let it journey with you till you can say of it as the disciples said of Christ, “Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way?”

II. We are now to TURN THE TEXT OVER; that is to say, we will misread it, yet read it rightly. Suppose the text were to run thus—“The eyes of the Lord’s people are always upon Him from the beginning of the year to the end of the year”? Dear friends, we like the text as it stands, but I do not believe we shall ever understand the fullness of it unless we receive it as I have now altered it, for we only understand God’s sight of us when we get a sight of Him. God, unknown to us, is our protector, but He is not such a protector that we can comfortably repose upon Him. We must discern Him by the eyes of faith, or else the mercy, though given by God, is not spiritually enjoyed in our hearts. Beloved, if God looks at us, how much more ought we to look at Him? When God sees us what does He see? Nothing—I was going to say—nothing, if He looks at us in ourselves, but that which is unworthy to be looked at. Now, on the contrary, when we look at Him what do *we* see? Oh such a sight, that I wonder not that Moses said, “I beseech You, show me Your glory.” What a vision will it be! Will it not be heaven’s own

vision to see God? Is not it the peculiar prerogative of the pure in heart that they shall see God? And yet, I cannot understand it, some of us have had the right to see God for years, and we have occasionally seen Him face to face, as a man speaks to his friend; by faith we have seen God, but, beloved, what I cannot understand is that we see so little of Him. Do you ever find yourself living all day without God? Not perhaps absolutely so, for you would not like to go to business without a little prayer in the morning; but do you not sometimes get through that morning's prayer without seeing God at all? I mean, is it not just the form of kneeling down, and saying good words and getting up again? And all through the day, have you not lived away from God? This is a strange world to live in, there are not many things to make one happy, and yet somehow we forget the very things that could give us happiness, and keep our eyes upon the frivolous cares and teasing troubles which distract us. So we even close the night—no taste of His love, no kiss of His lips that is better than wine; and our evening prayer—poor moaning it is, hardly a prayer.

I fear it is possible to live not only days but months at this dying rate, and it is horrible living, such horrible living that I would infinitely prefer to be locked up in the moldiest dungeon in which a man of God ever rotted and have the Lord's presence, than I would care to live in the noblest palace in which a sinner ever sported himself without God. After all, that which makes life life is the enjoyment of the presence of God. It is not so with the worldling—he can live without God, like the swine, who, being contented with their husks, lie down and sleep and wake again to feed; but the Christian cannot live on husks, he has a stomach above them, and if he does not get his God he will be miserable. God has ordained it so that a spiritual man is wretched without the love of God in his heart. If you and I want present happiness without God, we had better be outright sinners and live upon this world than try to be happy in religion without communion with Jesus. Present happiness for a genuine Christian in the absence of Christ is an absolute impossibility. We must have God or we are, of all men, most miserable. Suppose that in this year 1867 we were at any rate filled with the desire to have our eyes always upon God from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, to be always conscious that He sees us, to be always sensible of His presence—more than that, to be always longing to be obedient to His commands, always desiring to win souls for His dear Son from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; what a happy thing this would be! If we could abide in a spirit of prayerfulness or thankfulness, devout, consecrated, loving, tender, it would be a high thing to attain unto. Brothers and sisters, we believe in a great God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think, why not expect great things from Him? I think of this blessing, and I dare to ask for it; surely then He is able to give it. Do not let us stand back because of unbelief; let us ask that as God's eyes will be upon us, our eyes may be upon Him. What a blessed meeting of eyes when the Lord looks us full in the face, and we look at Him through the Mediator Christ Jesus, and the Lord declares, "I love you," and we answer, "We also love You, O our God!" Oh that we may be in harmony with the Lord our God, and find ourselves drawn upwards and bound to Him! May the Lord be the Sun, and we the dewdrops which sparkle in His rays and are exhaled and drawn aloft by the heat of His love! May God look down *from* heaven, and we look up *to* heaven, and both of us be happy in the sight of each other, delighting and rejoicing in mutual affection! This is what communion means. I have taken a long while to bring it to that one word, but that is what it means—

*"Daily communion let me prove
With You, blest object of my love."*

That was Toplady's desire, but I am afraid if I would express my own experience I must close with the other two of the verses where Toplady says—

*"But oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie."*

III. In the third place, we will imagine that WE BLOT THE TEXT OUT ALTOGETHER. Not that we can blot it out or would do so if we could, but we are to suppose that it is blotted out to imagine that you and I have to live all the year without the eyes of God upon us, not finding a moment from the beginning of the year to the end of the year in which we perceive the Lord to be caring for us or to be wait-

ing to be gracious to us. Imagine that there is none to whom we may appeal beyond our own fellow creatures for help. Oh miserable supposition! We have come to the opening of the year, and we have to get through it somehow, we must stumble through January, go muddling through the winter, groaning through the spring, sweating through the summer, fainting through the autumn, and groveling on to another Christmas, and no God to help us; no prayer when God is gone, no promise when God is no more. There could be no promise, no spiritual succor, no comfort, no help for us if there were no God. I will suppose this to be the case with any one of us here. But I hear you cry out, "Imagine not such a thing, for I would be like an orphan child without a father, I would be helpless—a tree with no water to its roots." But I will suppose this is the case of you sinners. You know you have been living for 20, or 30, or 40 years without God, without prayer, without trust, without hope, yet I would not wonder that if I were solemnly to tell you that God would not let you pray during the next year, and would not help you if you did pray, I would not wonder if you were greatly startled at it. Though I believe that the Lord will hear you from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; though I believe that He will watch over you and bless you if you seek Him, yet I fear that the most of you are despising His care, living without fellowship with Him, and so you are without God, without Christ, without hope, and will be so from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

There is a story told of a most eccentric minister, that walking out one morning he saw a man going to work, and said to him, "What a lovely morning! How grateful we ought to be to God for all His mercies!" The man said he did not know much about it. "Why," said the minister, "I suppose you always pray to God for your wife and family—for your children—don't you?" "No," he said, "I do not know that I do." "What," said the minister, "do you never pray?" "No." "Then I will give you half-a-crown, if you will promise me you never will as long as ever you live." "Oh," he said, "I shall be very glad of half-a-crown to get me a drop of beer." He took the half-crown and promised never to pray as long as he lived. He went to his work, and when he had been digging for a little while, he thought to himself, "That's a strange thing I have done this morning—a very strange thing—I've taken money and promised never to pray as long as I live." He thought it over, and it made him feel wretched. He went home to his wife and told her of it. "Well, John," she said, "you may depend upon it it was the devil, you've sold yourself to the devil for half-a-crown." This so bowed the poor wretch down that he did not know what to do with himself. This was all he thought about—that he had sold himself to the devil for money, and would soon be carried off to hell. He commenced attending places of worship, conscious that it was of no use, for he had sold himself to the devil, but he was really ill, bodily ill, through the fear and trembling which had come upon him. One night he recognized in the preacher the very man who had given him the half-crown, and probably the preacher recognized him, for the text was, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The preacher remarked that he knew a man who had sold his soul for half-a-crown. The poor man rushed forward and said, "Take it back! Take it back!" "You said you would never pray," said the minister, "if I gave you half-a-crown; do you now want to pray?" "Oh yes, I would give the world to be allowed to pray." That man was a great fool to sell his soul for half-a-crown, but some of you are a great deal bigger fools, *for you never had the half-crown*, and yet you still do not pray, and I dare say you never will, but will go down to hell never having sought God. Perhaps, if I could make this text negative, and say to you, "the eyes of God will *not* be upon you from the beginning of this year to the end of the year, and God will *not* hear and bless you," it might alarm and awaken you. But though I suggest the thought, I would rather you say, "Oh let not such a curse rest upon me, for I may die this year, and I may die this day. O God, hear me now!" Ah, dear hearer, if such a desire is in your heart the Lord will hear you and bless you with His salvation.

IV. Let us close with USING THE TEXT. The way to use it is this. If the eyes of the Lord will be upon us His people from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, what shall we do? Why, let us be as happy as we can during this year. You have your trials and troubles to come—do not expect that you will be free from them. The devil is not dead, and sparks still fly upward. Herein is your joy, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will never leave you nor forsake you. Up with your standard now and march on boldly! In the name of the Lord set up your banner, and begin to sing. Away with

worrisome care, God cares for us; the sparrows are fed, and shall not the children be? The lilies bloom, and shall not the saints be clothed? Let us roll all our burdens upon the Burden-Bearer. You will have enough to care for if you care for His cause as you should. Do not spoil your power to care for God by caring for yourself. This year let your motto be, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” By anxious thought you cannot add an inch to your stature, nor turn one hair white or black; take, then, no anxious thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Lean upon your God, and remember His promise that as your day is so shall your strength be. “I would have you,” says the apostle, “I would have you without carefulness.” He does not mean, I would have you without economy, without prudence and without discretion, but he means he would have you without fretfulness, without distrustful care. I would have you be without care for yourself, because the Lord’s eyes will be upon you.

Further, dear friends, I would have you use the text by the way of seeking greater blessings and richer mercies than you have ever enjoyed. Blessed be God for His merciful kindness towards this church; His loving-kindnesses have been very many; His favors new every morning and fresh every evening—but we need more. Let us not be content with a February blessing, though that is generally the month in which we have had our refreshing; let us seek to get a blessing today. I hope you will get it this afternoon in the Sunday school you workers there. And I hope you will have it in the senior classes from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Let there be no dullness, lethargy, and lukewarmness in the classes this afternoon. The brother who has to address the school will I hope speak to you with fervor and earnestness—there must be no coldness there. And I hope you who are preaching in the street, if it is possible in such weather, or going from house to house with tracts, or doing anything else, will have a blessing on this first Sunday of the year. But then shall we grow cold next Sunday? Not at all; it is from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Shall we endeavor to get up a little excitement, and have a revival for five or six weeks? No, blessed be God, we must have it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. While we have a spring which never grows dry, why should the pitcher ever be empty? Surely gratitude can find us fuel enough in the forests of memory to keep the fire of love always flaming. Why should we be weary when the glorious prize is worthy of our constant exertions, when the great crowd of witnesses hold us in full survey? May our Lord by His Spirit bring you and me to a high pitch of prayerfulness, and then let us continue in prayer from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. May God bring you and me to a high degree of generosity, and then may we be always giving from the beginning of the year to the end of the year every week, from the first to the last, always laying by in store as God has prospered us for His cause. May we be always active, always industrious, always hopeful, always spiritual, always heavenly, and always raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So may our gracious God deal with us from the beginning of the year to the end of the year through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 91.

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