

# THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

## NO. 532

A SERMON  
 DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1863  
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON  
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.”*  
*Psalm 65:11*

POSSIBLY objections might have been raised to a day of thanksgiving for the abundant harvest if it had been ordered or suggested by government. Certain brethren are so exceedingly tender in their consciences upon the point of connection between church and state, that they would have thought it almost a reason for not being thankful at all if the government had recommended them to celebrate a day of public thanksgiving.

Although I have no love to the unscriptural union of church and state, I would on this occasion have hailed an official request for a national recognition of the special goodness of God. However, none of us can feel any objection arising in our minds if it be now agreed that *today* we will praise our ever-bounteous Lord and as an assembly record our gratitude to the God of the harvest.

We are probably the largest assembly of Christian people in the world and it is well that we should set the example to the smaller churches. Doubtless many other believers will follow in our track, and so a public thanksgiving will become general throughout the country. I hope to see every congregation in the land raising a special offering unto the Lord, to be devoted either to His church, to the poor, to missions, or some other holy end. Yes, I would have every Christian offer willingly unto the Lord as a token of his gratitude to the God of providence.

I had almost forgotten that today we have to ask your contributions for the support of two ministers of our own body laboring in Germany. It is well that it so happens, because it furnishes an object for the practical expression of the thanks which we feel to Almighty God. While as the sum required for this objective will at once be raised, our beloved college will be a worthy object for friends at a distance to assist with their freewill offerings.

Without any preface, we will divide our text as it divides itself. Here we have *crowning mercies calling for crowning gratitude*. And in the same verse, *paths of fatness, which should be to us ways of delight*. When we have talked upon these two points, we may meditate for a few moments upon the whole subject and endeavor, as God shall help us, to see what duties it suggests.

**I.** First of all, we have here CROWNING MERCIES, SUGGESTING SPECIAL AND CROWNING THANKSGIVING.

All the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us. Both when we sleep and when we wake, His mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave off shining, but our God will never cease to cheer His children with His love. Like a river, His loving kindness is always flowing with a fullness as inexhaustible as His own nature, which is its source. Like the atmosphere which always surrounds the earth and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all His creature. In it, as in their element they live, and move, and have their being.

Yet as the sun on summer days appears to gladden us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen with the rain, and as the atmosphere itself on occasions is fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God. It has its golden hours, its days of overflow, when the Lord magnifies His grace and lifts high His love before the sons of men.

If we begin with the blessings of the nether springs, we must not forget that for the race of man *the joyous days of harvest* are a special season of excessive favor. It is the glory of autumn that the ripe gifts of providence are then abundantly bestowed. It is the mellow season of realization, whereas all before was but hope and expectation. Great is the joy of harvest. Happy are the reapers who fill their arms with the liberality of heaven. The psalmist tells us that the harvest is the crowning of the year.

What if I compare the opening spring to the proclamation of a new prince, the latest born of Father Time? With the musical voices of birds, and the joyful lowing of herds, a new era of fertility is ushered in. Every verdant meadow and every leaping brook hears the joyful proclamation and feels a new life within.

The little hills rejoice on every side. They shout for joy. They also sing. Throughout the warm months of summer the royal year is robing itself in beauty and adorning itself in sumptuous array. What with the plates of ivory, yielded by the lilies, the rubies of the rose, the emeralds of the meads, and all manner of fair colors from the many flowers, we may well say that, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

No studs of silver or rows of jewels can vie with the ornaments of the year. No garments of needlework of divers colors can match the glorious vesture of Time's reigning son. But the moment of the coronation, when earth feels most the sway of the year, is in the fullness of autumn.

Then it is when the fields are covered with a cloth of gold, and fruits are glowing with the rich hues of ripeness, and the leaves are burnished with inimitable perfection of tint and shade, then with a coronal of divine goodness, amidst the glad shouts of toiling swains, and the songs of rejoicing maidens, the year is crowned. Upon a throne of golden corn, with the peaceful sickle for his sceptre, sits the crowned year bearing the goodness of the Lord as a coronet upon his placid brow.

Or what if we compare the year to a conqueror, striving at first with stern winter, wrestling hard against all his boisterous attacks, and at last joyfully conquering in the fair days of spring, riding in triumph throughout the summer along a pathway strewn with flowers, and at last, mounting the throne amidst the festivities of harvest, while the Lord in loving kindness puts a diadem of beauty and goodness upon its head.

*"Cheerfulness and holy pleasure  
Well become our happy isle,  
When our God in copious measure  
Deigns to bless us with His smile;  
Joyful then all people come,  
Celebrate the harvest home."*

We may forget the harvest, living as we do, so far from rural labors, but those who have to watch the corn as it springs up and track it through all its numberless dangers, until the blade becomes the full corn in the ear, cannot, surely, forget the wonderful goodness and mercy of God when they see the harvest safely stored. My brethren, if we require any considerations to excite us to gratitude, let us think for a moment of the effect upon our country of *a total failure* of the crops.

Suppose today it were reported that as yet the corn was not carried, that the continued showers had made it sprout and grow till there was no hope of its being of any further use, and that it might as well be left in the fields. What dismay would that message carry into every cottage! Who among us could contemplate the future without dismay? All faces would gather blackness. All classes would sorrow and even the throne itself might fitly be covered with sackcloth at the news.

At this day the kingdom of Egypt sits trembling. The rejoicing and abounding land trembles for her sons. The Nile has swollen beyond its proper limit, the waters still continue to rise, and a few more days must see the fields covered with devastating floods. If it is so, alas for that land in other years so favored as to have given us the proverb of "Corn in Egypt."

My brethren, should we not rejoice that this is not our case and that our happy land rejoices in plenty? If the plant had utterly failed, and the seed had rotted under the clods, we should have been quick enough to murmur—how is it that we are so slow to praise?

Take a lower view of the matter, suppose even *a partial scarcity*. At this juncture, when one arm of our industry is paralyzed, how serious would have been this calamity! With a staple commodity withdrawn from us, with the daily peril of war at our gates, it would have been a fearful trial to have suffered scarcity of bread. Shall we not bless and praise our covenant God who permits not the appointed weeks of harvest to fail? Sing together all you to whom bread is the staff of life and rejoice before Him who loads you with benefits.

We have none of us any adequate idea of *the amount of happiness* conferred upon a nation by a luxuriant crop. Every man in the land is the richer for it. To the poor man the difference is of the utmost importance. His three shillings are now worth four. There is more bread for the children or more money for clothes. Millions are benefited by God's once opening His liberal hand.

When the Hebrews went through the desert, there were but some two or three millions of them, and yet they sang sweetly of Him who fed His chosen people. In our own land alone we have ten times the number, have we no hallowed music for the God of the whole earth? Reflect upon the amazing population of our enormous city—consider the immense amount of poverty—think how greatly at one stroke that poverty has been relieved! A generous contribution, equal to that made for the Lancashire distress, would be but as a drop in a bucket to the relief afforded by a fall in the price of bread.

Let us not despise the bounty of God, because this great benefit comes in a natural way. If every morning when we awoke we saw fresh loaves of bread put into our cupboard, or the morning's meal set out upon the table, we should think it a miracle. But if our God blesses our own exertions, and prospers our own toil to the same end, is it not equally as much a ground for praising and blessing His name?

I would I had this morning the tongue of the eloquent, or even my own usual strength, to excite you to gratitude, by the spectacle of the multitudes of beings whom God has made happy by the fruit of the field. My sickness today makes my thoughts wander and makes me unfit for so noble a theme, yet my soul pants to set your hearts on a blaze. O for heaven's own fire to kindle your hearts. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us exalt the Lord our God, and come into His presence with the voice of joy and thanksgiving.

But how shall we give crowning thanksgiving for this crowning mercy of the year? We can do it, dear friends, by the *inward emotions of gratitude*. Let our hearts be warmed. Let our spirits remember, meditate, and think upon this goodness of the Lord. Meditation upon this mercy may tend to nourish in you the tenderest feelings of affection, and your souls will be knit to the Father of spirits, who pities His children.

Again, *praise Him with your lips*. Let psalms and hymns employ your tongues today. And tomorrow, when we meet together at the prayer meeting, let us turn it rather into a praise meeting, and let us laud and magnify His name from whose bounty all this goodness flows. But I think also we should thank Him by *our gifts*. The Jews of old never tasted the fruit either of the barley or of the wheat harvest till they had sanctified it to the Lord by the feast of ingatherings.

There was, early in the season, the barley harvest. One sheaf of this barley was taken and waved before the Lord with special sacrifices, and then afterwards the people feasted. Fifty days afterwards came the wheat harvest, when two loaves, made of the new flour, were offered before the Lord in sacrifice, together with burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, meat-offerings, drink-offerings, and abundant sacrifices of thanksgivings, to show that the people's thankfulness was not stinted or mean. No man ate either of the ears, or grain, or corn ground and made into bread, until first of all he had sanctified his substance by the dedication of somewhat unto the Lord.

And shall we do less than the Jew? Shall he, for types and shadows, express his gratitude in a solid manner and shall not we? Did he offer unto the Lord whom he scarce knew, and bow before that Most High God who hid His face amidst the smoke of burning rams and bullocks? and shall not we who see

the glory of the Lord in the face of Christ Jesus come unto Him and bring to Him our offerings? The Old Testament ordinance was, “Ye shall not come before the LORD empty.”

And let that be the ordinance of today. Let us come into His presence, each man bearing his offering of thanksgiving unto the Lord. But enough concerning this particular harvest. It has been a crowning mercy this year, so that the other version of our text might aptly be applied as a description of 1863, “Thou crownest the year of thy goodness.”

Furthermore, beloved, we have heard of heavenly harvests, the out-flowings of the upper springs, which, in days of yore, awakened the church of God to loudest praise. There was the harvest of Pentecost. Christ having been sown in the ground like a grain of wheat, sprang up from it, and in His resurrection and ascension was like the waved sheaf before the Lord. Let us never forget that resurrection which crowned the year of God’s redeemed with goodness.

It was a terrible year indeed. It began in the howling tempests of Christ’s poverty, and want, and shame, and suffering, and death. It seemed to have no spring and no summer, but yet it was crowned with an abundant harvest when Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Fifty days after the resurrection came the Pentecost. The barley harvest had been passed wherein the wave-sheaf was offered. Then came the days of wheat harvest.

Peter, and the eleven who were with him, became the reapers, and three thousand souls fell beneath the Gospel sickle. There was great joy in the city of Jerusalem that day—nay, all the saints who heard thereof were glad, and heaven itself, catching the divine enthusiasm, rang with harvest joy. It is recorded that the saints ate their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. Pentecost was a crowning mercy and it was remembered by the saints with crowning thanks.

May I not say that we have had the like crowning mercy shown to this our highly-favored land, in *the revivals* which a few years ago were so plentiful among us, and which even now hover over our heads. The Spirit of the Lord suddenly fell upon many a city and village. Where the Gospel had been preached with dull and heavy tones, suddenly the minister began to glow—the cords which bound his tongue were snapped, and like a seraph full of heavenly fire, he began to tell of the love of Jesus. Souls were moved as the trees of the wood are moved in the wind, spirits long dead in sin’s tremendous sepulchre woke up at the quickening breath. They stood upon their feet as a great army—they praised the Lord.

Other towns and other villages received the like Pentecostal shower and we had hoped—O that our hopes had been realized—that all England would have been filled with the same divine enthusiasm and that the effects would have continued among us. To a great extent the revival has departed, and many of our churches are more stolid and cold than ever.

And our denomination—never too zealous, seldom guilty of excessive heat, seems to have now, I think, as little earnest life as it ever had. Back to their old beds of slumber—back again to their old dens of routine—downward again to Laodicean lukewarmness have they stolen. Their goodness was as a morning cloud and as the early dew it passes away. O that the Lord would once again crown the year with His goodness and send us revivals from the right hand of the Most High.

Here it is, O well-beloved flock of my care and love, that I ask your gratitude, mainly and chiefly. My brethren, how the Lord has cheered and comforted our hearts, while He has crowned our years with His goodness. Here these ten years have I, as He has enabled me, preached the Gospel among you. We have seen no excitement, no stirrings of an unwarranted fanaticism, no wildfires have been kindled, and yet see how the multitude have listened to the Gospel with unceasing attention. And the surging crowds at yonder doors prove that, as in the days of John the Baptist, so it is now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and every man presses into it.

As for conversions, has not the Lord been pleased to give them to us as constantly as the sun rises in his place? Scarce a sermon without the benediction of the Most High—many of them preached in weakness, which none of you have known but the speaker, preached at times with throbs of heart and partings of anguish, which have made the preacher go home mourning that he ever preached at all. And

yet success has come and souls have been saved, and the preacher's heart has been made to sing for joy, for the seed rots not, the furrows are good, the field has been well-prepared, and where the seed falls it brings forth a hundredfold, to the praise and honor of the Most High.

Brethren, we must not forget this. We might have preached for nought. We might have ploughed the thankless rock and gathered no sheaves. Why then does He bless us? Is it our worthiness? Ah, no. Is it for ought in the preacher or in the hearers? God forbid that we should think such a thing. It has been the sovereign mercy of God which has prospered His own truth among us, and shall we not for this praise and bless His name?

If we, as a church, do not continue to be as prayerful and as earnest as we have been, the Lord may justly make us like Shiloh, which He deserted, until it became a desolation where not one stone was left upon another. Nay, I venture to say if we do not progress in earnestness, if you, my hearers, do not become more than ever devoted to the Lord's cause, if there be not more and more of an earnest missionary spirit stirred up and nurtured among us, we may expect the Lord to turn away from us, and find another people who shall more worthily repay His favors. Who knows but you may have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

Perhaps the Lord intends, by some of you, to save multitudes of souls, to stir up His churches, and to awaken the slumbering spirit of religion. Will you prove unworthy? Will you say, "I pray thee have me excused." Will you not rather, in looking back upon the plentiful harvest of souls reaped in this place, consider that you are in debt to God, and therefore give to Him the fullest consecration that believers can offer, because of the crowning mercies which we as a church receive? "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

Beloved, one more remark here. We are looking forward to a time when this world's year shall be crowned with God's goodness in the highest and most boundless sense. Centuries are flying and yet the darkness lingers—time grows old and yet the idols sit upon their thrones. Christ does not reign yet. His unsuffering kingdom has not come. The sceptres are still in the hands of despots and slaves still fret in iron bonds.

In vain, in vain, O earth, have you expected brighter days, for still the thick and heavy night rests o'er your sons. But the day *shall* come—and the signs of its coming are increasing in their brightness—the day *shall* come when the harvest of the world shall be reaped.

Christ has not died in vain. He redeemed the world with His blood, and the whole world He will have. From eastern coast to western, Christ must reign. Yet will the seed of the woman chase the powers of darkness back to their evil habitations. Yet shall He pierce the crooked serpent and cut leviathan that is in the depths of the sea. Yet shall the trumpet ring, and the multitudes represented in Him when He rose as the great wave-sheaf, shall rise from the dead from land and sea.

And yet, in the day of His appearing, shall the kings of the earth yield up their sovereignty and all nations shall call Him blessed. Tarry awhile, beloved, wait you yet a little season, and when you shall hear the shout, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," then shall you know that He crowns the year with His goodness.

**II.** But we must leave this point and turn to the next. PATHS OF FATNESS SHOULD BE WAYS OF DUTY. "And thy paths drop fatness."

When the conqueror journeys through the nations, his paths drop blood. Fire and vapor of smoke are in his track, and tears, and groans, and sighs attend him. But where the Lord journeys, His "paths drop fatness." When the kings of old made progress through their dominions, they caused a famine wherever they tarried, for the greedy courtiers who swarmed in their camp devoured all things like locusts, and were as greedily ravenous as palmer-worms and caterpillars. But where the great King of kings journeys, He enriches the land, His "paths drop fatness."

By a bold Hebrew metaphor—and the Hebrew poetry certainly seems to be the most sublime in its conceptions—the clouds are represented as the chariots of God, "He maketh the clouds his chariot" and as the Lord JEHOVAH rides upon the heavens in the greatness of His strength and in His excellency on

the sky, the rains drop down upon the lands, and so the wheel-tracks of JEHOVAH are marked by the fatness which makes glad the earth. Happy, happy are the people who worship such a God, whose coming is always a coming of goodness and of grace to His creatures.

We see, then, dear friends, that *in providence*, wherever the Lord comes, His “paths drop fatness.” He may sometimes seem to pinch His people and bring them into want, but if there be not a fatness of outward good, there will be a fatness of inward mercy. Even the trials which the Lord scatters like coals of fire in His path, do but burn up the weeds and warm the heart of the soil.

Do but trust the Lord, and appeal to Him in all your straits and difficulties, and you shall find that when He comes forth out of His hiding place for your help, His paths shall drop fatness. Your poverty shall be removed and your dejection of spirit shall be cheered.

Beloved, we believe that our text has a fullness of meaning if it be viewed in a spiritual sense, “His paths drop fatness.” *In the use of the means*, the sinner will find God’s paths drop with fatness. Are you hungry and thirsty? Does your soul faint within you? Are you longing to be satisfied with favor? Then, sinner, wait upon the Lord and hearken diligently unto the message of His Gospel. Be you constantly searching the Scriptures or listening to His truth as it is proclaimed in your ears.

Especially, sinner, remember that the ways of the Lord are to be seen in the person of Christ. Go to those hands which are the trackways of divine justice. Go to those feet which are the pathways of infinite love. Explore that side where deep affection dwells and you shall find fatness of mercy dropping there.

No sinner ever did come to God and was sent away empty. You may attend the means, I grant you, and yet find no comfort, for means are not always God’s paths, but you cannot come to Christ, you cannot rest in Him and be disappointed. Trust in Him at all times, and however deep your poverty, it shall have a superabundant supply. “His paths drop fatness.”

You also who are His people, I know that sometimes your souls grow faint. Weary with the wilderness, worn with its cares, torn with its briars, you come up to the house of God, and oh, if you come there to see your Master, and not merely to join in the routine of service, if you come there seeking after Him, and panting for Him as the hart pants for the water brooks, you will find that the commonest services—poor though be the minister, and plain the place, and simple the people, though the music may have but little charm for the ear of taste, and the words of the speaker may have none of the trappings of oratory, yet sweet to you shall be the worship of God’s house, and you shall find that “His paths drop fatness.”

So, too, in the use of those precious ordinances—baptism and the Lord’s supper. You that know the truth, and are made free by it, shall find that those paths drop fatness. I believe many of you are lean and starved, because you are not obedient to your Lord’s command in baptism. You know what He bids you do, but you stand back from it. You comprehend your duty, and perhaps you say you are Baptists in principle, forgetting that this very principle of yours is that which will condemn you unless you carry it out. In keeping that commandment there is a great reward. And many, besides the Ethiopian noble of Queen Candace’s empire, have gone on their way rejoicing from the baptismal stream.

It is peculiarly so at the Lord’s table. I would not give up the Lord’s supper as a means of grace for ought that could be devised. To the godless it must ever be a condemnation, but to the saint of God who comes there, desiring to be fed with the flesh of Christ, it becomes a feast indeed.

I do trust, dear friends, that in a very short time we shall celebrate the Lord’s supper every Sabbath-day. I am convicted that a weekly celebration is Scriptural, and I see more and more the need of it. I think it is an ordinance to which we ought not to prescribe our own times and our own seasons, where the Word of God is so very express and so plain. Such was apostolic custom, search for yourselves and see.

Indeed, if there were no apostolic precedent, methinks the sweetness of the service and the delightful nature of the ordinance might suggest to Christians that it was well to have it frequently. We cannot be

satisfied once a month with communion with Christ and I think we hardly ought to be satisfied with the sign itself so seldom. God's paths drop fatness—happy are they who diligently walk in them.

Beloved, the Lord has other paths besides those of the open means of grace and these too drop fatness. Especially let me mention to you the *path of prayer*. No believer ever says, "My leanness, my leanness. Woe unto me," who is much in the closet. Starving souls generally live at a distance from the mercy seat. Close access to God in wrestling prayer is sure to make the believer strong—if not happy.

The nearest place to the gate of heaven is the throne of the heavenly grace. Much alone, and you will have much assurance—little alone with God, your religion will be very shallow. You shall have many doubts and fears, and but little of the joy of the Lord. Let us see to it, beloved, that since the soul-enriching path of prayer is open to the very weakest saint, since no high attainments are required, since you are not bidden to come because you are an advanced saint, but freely invited if you are a saint at all, let us see to it, I say, that we are often in the way of private devotion. Be much on your knees, for so Elijah drew the rain upon famished Israel's fields.

The like, certainly, I may say of the secret path of *communion*. Oh! the delights which are to be had by that man who has fellowship with Christ! Earth has no words which can set forth the holy mirth of the soul that leans on Jesus' bosom. Few Christians understand it, they live in the lowlands and seldom climb to the top of Nebo. They live outside. They come not into the holy place. They take not up the privilege of priesthood.

At a distance they see the sacrifice, but they sit not down with the priest to eat thereof, and to enjoy the fat of the burnt offering. Brother, sister, sit you always under the shadow of Jesus. Come up to that palm tree, and take hold of the branches thereof. Let your Beloved be unto you as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and you shall find a never-failing fruit which shall ever be sweet unto your taste.

I must not forget that the path of *faith*, too, is a path that drops fatness. It is a strange path—few walk in it, even of professors. But they who in temporals and in spirituals have learned to lean on God alone, shall find it a path of fatness.

As we spoke the other morning concerning the cedars up there upon that stormy ridge, unwatered by a single river, and yet always green, so shall the Christian be who lives alone upon his God. Wait thou only upon God. Let your expectation be from Him. The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but you shall not want any good thing, for the paths of the Lord shall drop fatness to you.

O my dear hearers, I would to God the Lord would come into the midst of our churches and congregations by *His Spirit*, then would His path drop fatness. We have a multitude of complaints at different times of the dullness and lethargy of the churches, but what we need is more of the presence of the Holy Spirit—more of the holy baptism of His sacred influences.

In a very quaint sermon by Matthew Wilkes, I remember he said that ministers were like pens—some of them were common goose quills, writing very heavily and often requiring sharpening. Others of them, he said—the college men—were like steel pens, and while they could make good fine up-strokes, they could not make such heavy down-strokes as some of the quills could. But he said, neither the one pen nor the other could do anything without ink, and therefore, he said, our ministers want more ink.

The ink is the Holy Spirit, "Written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." And so Mr. Wilkes suggested that people, instead of finding fault with the minister, would do well to pray, "Lord, give him more ink—give him more ink!" There is much in that prayer, for we need often to be dipped in that ink or else we cannot make a mark on your hearts. However experienced we may be in sacred service, you and I cannot serve God effectually, nor see any power resting on our ministry, except as we get more of the Spirit of the living God.

I would that the churches laid to heart more and more the real need of the times. We have been building hosts of chapels lately, and raising thousands of pounds, and because there were revivals, and we hear of them every now and then, we have been thinking that we are in a good state. Now, I venture to say that all our denominations are in a bad state.

There is one which I mention with profound respect, whose statistics cause me sincere sorrow. I believe that in that large, wealthy, and most earnest body of Christians, the Wesleyans, the clear increase of all the Wesleyan Chapels in the whole metropolis, including a wide district around London, for the whole of this year, is far from equal to the annual increase of this one church.

If I am not mistaken, the increase throughout the whole of the United Kingdom is about four thousand five hundred, being scarcely two per cent upon the whole body. If our Baptist denomination could have as good and clear statistics, I exceedingly much question whether we should be found, taking the whole of us together, to be in a much better state.

The fact is, denominations, when they are poor and despised, and live upon God, and are all earnest, always increase and have many conversions. But we are getting all of us so respectable, building fine chapels, and looking after schools, and all sorts of things, that the Spirit of God is departing from us, we are losing the divine anointing and the blessed unction—we are congratulating ourselves upon an enlightenment which does not exist and upon an advancement that is all moonshine.

Look at the journals for last week, and see with horror a picture of superstition worthy of the dark ages exhibited in a country village, where, to my knowledge, there is both an Independent and Baptist chapel, and yet the people believe in witchcraft still! Is this, is this the effect of religion? Why, our places of worship do not operate as they should upon the people. They are, in most places, mere clubs where good people spend their Sundays, but the outlying mass is not touched. We have lost the old fire to a great extent, the divine enthusiasm, the Pentecostal furor, that sacred flame of the first apostles, which is so much needed if ever we are to startle a dying world, is almost extinct.

And in this place, where God has favored us with much of His presence, we are getting into very much the same condition. How many of you who once were earnest are now as cold as slabs of ice! Some of you do hardly anything for my Lord and Master. Converted, I trust you are, but where is your first love? Where is the love of your espousals which made some of you talk of Jesus by day and dream of Him by night? O for a return to God's paths—O for a revival once again in the midst of the churches.

Ten years ago, we could speak honestly that the churches were almost dead, but I think they are worse now, because they have cherished the idea that they are not so dead as they were. We are as bad as ever, with a name to live, whereas we are dead. O that some trumpet voice could wake our sleeping churches once again.

Can you live without souls saved? If you can, I cannot. Can you live without London being enlightened with the light of God? If you can so live, I pray my Master let me die. Can you bear to fight and win no victories? To sow and reap no harvests? Brethren, if you are right, you cannot endure it, but you must endure it till the Lord comes forth. Let us pray therefore with might and main, with a holy violence which will take no denial, let us pray the Lord to come forth out of His hiding place, for His "paths drop fatness," and there is fatness to be found nowhere else besides.

**III.** And now I close. The whole subject seems to give us one or two suggestions as to matters of duty. "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." One suggestion is this, some of you in this house are strangers to God, you have been living as His enemies, and you will probably die so. But what a blessing it would be if a part of the crown of this year should be your conversion! "The harvest is past and the summer is ended, and ye are not saved." But oh, what a joy, if this very day you should turn unto God and live!

Remember, the way of salvation was freely proclaimed last Sabbath morning, it runs in this style, "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Soul, if this day you trust in Christ, it shall be your spiritual birthday, it shall be unto you the beginning of days. Emancipated from your chains, delivered from the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, you shall be the Lord's free man. What say you? O that the Spirit of God would bring you this day to turn unto Him with full purpose of heart.

Another suggestion. Would not the Lord crown this year with His goodness if He would move some of you to do more for Him than you have ever done before? Cannot you think of some new thing that



you have forgotten, but which is in the power of your hand? Can you not do it for Christ today—some fresh soul you have never conversed with, some fresh means of usefulness you have never attempted?

And lastly, would not it be well for us if the Lord would crown this year with His goodness by making us begin from this day to be more prayerful? Let our prayer meetings have more at them, and let everyone in his closet pray more for the preacher, pray more for the church. Let us, every one of us, give our hearts anew to Christ.

What say you today, to renew your consecration vow? Let us say to Him, “Here, Lord, I give myself to You once more. You have bought me with Your blood, accept me over again. From this good hour I will begin a new life for a second time if Your Spirit be with me. Help me, Lord, for Jesus Christ’s sake.” Amen.

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