

New Years' Address, January 1864

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life that honors God, trusting in His power and promises, and maintaining our spiritual lives through faith and surrender.

Scripture: Psalm 90:12, Ecclesiastes 3:1, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 2:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 2 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 12:1, James 5:16, 1 John 2:15

Topics: "Mortality And Faith", "Prayer And Communion"

Description

J.C. Philpot delivers a powerful sermon on reflecting on the passing of time as the year comes to an end, drawing parallels between the close of the year and the certainty of death. He urges listeners to remember lost loved ones, be thankful for mercies amidst trials, and seek to be established in the truth of the gospel. Philpot emphasizes the importance of maintaining a spirit of prayer and avoiding entanglement in worldly matters to nurture faith and communion with God.

Transcript

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Nothing, as a visible record of the lapse of time, more sensibly reminds us of the passing away of life; nothing, among the ever-changing aspects of surrounding nature, more vividly brings before our eyes the certainty of death than the close of each succeeding year. The END of the year! What a funeral knell is in the very sound! What a warning emblem of the end of life! As the year was born, so were we; as the year had its joyous spring, its glowing summer, its fruitful autumn, so had we our merry boyhood, our aspiring youth, our sober manhood. And now what lies before us? The corpse of the departed year. For several weeks we saw it gradually droop. We marked its daily decline, until its last hour struck, and in a moment it became a thing of the past. So shall we, when our appointed time comes, droop, decline, and die; our body will fall into its native earth, as the past year has sunk into its grave, and we, like it, shall go hence and be no more seen.

But besides this striking emblem of death, presented to our view by the dying year, there is something in the very season at which the year dies, which is peculiarly fitted to remind us of our own mortality. The dark and gloomy days; the rapid setting in of night; the mists and fogs which lower over the earth- the general death and decay of nature, lately so bright and fair; the frost which chills our blood, or the storm which beats against our windows; the melancholy musings which often fall upon our spirit at this season of the year, as if prompted by, and in unison with the wintry scene, all tend vividly to bring before us the

solemn conviction that our life here is but a shadow, a dream, a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. In this musing mood, which is not altogether without its chastened calm or its profitable influence, we look back through the year now forever gone, and seek perhaps to recall more vividly to our mind some of those circumstances in it which have left a deep and abiding mark on our memory.

1. Our first thoughts turn to the memory of those personal friends, or beloved relatives, whose well-known faces we shall see no more, whose familiar voices will never again sound tenderly in our ears. Have not some of you, dear readers, during the year now past, been robbed of one or more of your most cherished household treasures? Our very monthly Obituary testifies that there lines will meet the eye of many a weeping widow, of many a mourning husband, or bereaved parent. Tears are due to the memory of the departed. At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus wept. Grace does not forbid the tear, but it bids us "sorrow not, even as others who have no hope." Would you wish the dear departed back? Would you, if you could, recall them to life? Even if there were no hope in their end, must we not still bow to the sovereignty of the almighty? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Why, then, tear open the wound by dwelling too long or too deeply on the irrevocable past?

2. But we may have been spared these cutting strokes. Death may not have come into our home and torn away that beloved head of the family, that tender wife, that idolized child, whose absence has made the Christmas season so mournful a blank. Still the last enemy may have made an inroad into our midst, the effects of which we shall long deeply and increasingly feel. He may, as in our own peculiar case, have come into our church, and borne away members with whom we had been long united in church fellowship. They are gone, and have left us still to struggle on in the wilderness. But though we would not wish them back, for they are with Christ, which is far better, yet we miss their presence in the house of prayer and at the Lord's table; we miss their prayers, so simple and fervent, their kind words of sympathy and affection, their friendly communion, or their forcible example.

3. Our thoughts then, perhaps, turn to those dear and highly-valued servants of God whom we knew personally or by favorable report, whom he has taken home to himself, and we wonder how their places can be supplied. We think of their widowed churches and scattered flocks, and feel what an almost irreparable loss a faithful and experienced servant of God is to his church and congregation. Dark is the cloud that hangs over Zion. Men of sterling, experimental truth, sound in the faith, godly in life, able ministers of the New Testament, are fast passing away. Some the Lord is taking home to himself, and others he is laying aside by sickness or infirmity. But look where we may, how few do we see raised up to take their places. "The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart." Meanwhile error abounds and spreads; and many are deeply infected with it, who, from prudential motives, keep it at present out of sight, or disguise it under a form of sound words.

4. Nor, while in this musing mood, in harmony with the season, does busy memory forget the various incidents which have more or less strikingly marked the past year as regards our own personal experience of sorrow or joy, affliction or consolation. Mercies as well as miseries strewed the path- a hundred mercies to ten miseries, were faith allowed to make up the reckoning, and strike out unbeliever's figures. Illness may have laid us on the bed of affliction; but, were there no mercies here? Did no kind hands nurse the body? Did no kind words cheer the spirit? Were no prayers offered up on our behalf by Christian friends- no solicitude for our recovery; no desire that the affliction might be blessed to the soul? Was there no secret support given on the bed of languishing; no submission granted to the will of God; no faith drawn forth on the word of promise; no sweet hope in the Lord of life and glory; no love to his dear name? Nor was

recovery denied, or the blessing of returning health and strength refused to prayer, or the willing mind rejected to give time and strength and what remained of life more unreservedly to the Lord and his people.

5. Other trials may have marked our path, such as church troubles, the heaviest of all next to those which more peculiarly touch the soul's own immediate interests. But even these, we trust, though they severely tried the mind, will be found eventually to work for good to those who love God and desire to walk in his fear. There are few keener tests of men's spirits than the way in which they bear themselves in those strifes and divisions from which few churches are exempt. Nowhere is more manifestly seen the difference between the spirit of wrath and the spirit of meekness, the spirit of strife and the spirit of peace, the violent, contentious, unforgiving spirit of some, and the forbearing, forgiving, and yet firm and faithful spirit of others. Thus, even by these painful things, grace is tried, the approved made manifest, and the thoughts of many hearts revealed. (1 Cor. 11:19; Luke 2:35.)

6. Nor let us forget, dear friends and brethren, amid our many rich and unspeakable mercies, that eminent favor of the maintenance of divine life in our breast. O what have we not done to quench the sacred flame? With what sacrilegious hands have we piled dust and rubbish on God's altar! What unbelief, what infidelity, what earthliness and worldly-mindedness, what pride and covetousness, what abounding evils of every shape and name have worked in our carnal mind to bring forth fruit unto death. How these and a thousand other evils, too base to name, would have effectually damped, if not destroyed, the life of God in the soul, had it not been maintained by Him who first gave it. But how sweet the promise, how sure its fulfillment. "Because I live, you shall live also." The various revivals, then, and renewals of the life of God in the bosom, those seasonable helps by the way, those refreshings from the presence of the Lord, those gracious visitations whereby he preserves our spirit, have been some of our choicest past year's mercies; for where would our soul have been without them? Into what depths of carnality would it not have sunk? Under what loads of darkness and death would it not have been buried?

The sweetness and delight sometimes felt in the word of God, as the eyes of the understanding were enlightened to see, and faith was raised up to mix with the divine testimony; the life and liberty, access and power enjoyed in secret prayer; the rays and beams of divine light which sometimes shone upon the glorious truths which are the very foundation of our most holy faith; the meltings of heart felt before the throne, under a sight and sense of our cruel sins and of the Lord's goodness and mercy; if a minister, seasons of enlargement, of boldness and faithfulness in handling the word of life; if a hearer, blessings communicated under the ministry, to make the soul revive as the corn, and grow as the vine- to have been thus, as if miraculously, kept alive in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, was not mercy here? Has 1863 passed away and left none of these mercies to be thankfully recorded? Does not the Lord say to us, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jer. 2:31;) and must we not answer, "No, Lord; you have not been thus to us during the year now past?"

7. But is it not a mercy also to have been in any way kept from evil that it should not grieve us; to have been in any measure preserved tender, circumspect, simple and sincere; to have brought no distressing, overwhelming guilt upon our consciences by giving way to unseemly lusts; to have caused no grief to the dear children of God by open inconsistency? We are deeply conscious of many wanderings of heart, much inward backsliding from the Lord, many infirmities of the flesh, much darkness of mind, coldness of affection, and deadness of frame; but to have been kept from conscience-wasting sins is no small mercy, when we feel ourselves tempted to them on every hand.

8. To have been preserved from the abounding errors of the day, and still to hold the truth with firm and steady hand; to have walked in any measure separate from that loose, ungodly profession which so marks the present day; to have enjoyed any union and communion with the real saints of God; and to have loved and cleaved to them as the excellent of the earth- has 1863 left no such testimonies in our favor, which we wish to bear in mind, not with the boasting pride of the self-righteous Pharisee, but the thankful acknowledgment of our deep indebtedness to super-abounding grace?

But your path may have been one of deeper trial, more painful exercise, and more severe temptation, than that which we have thus sketched out. Be it so. Then if your afflictions have been greater, greater have been your consolations; if your miseries have abounded, your mercies have super-abounded. You have been further and deeper in the wilderness, but have gathered more manna; have felt more of the storm, but have seen more of the sun; have had more fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, but have known more of the power of his resurrection. Thus are we even. You who have gathered much, have nothing over; we who have gathered little, have no lack.

We have struck, then, the keynote of our Address- the Old Year and the New; for as we have taken the departed year as the emblem of death and decay, so will we now take the New Year as the emblem of life and resurrection. For as the departed year is but a shadowy emblem of death, so death itself, with all its gloomy accompaniments, is really but the shadow of a shade. Has not the Lord destroyed death and him who had the power of death, that is, the devil?" (Heb. 2:14.) Has he not "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel?" (2 Tim. 1:10.) If death then be "destroyed" and "abolished," it can have no real substance; and if it has no substance, it can have no shadow. But it often casts, you will say, a very gloomy shadow over our feelings. It is true; but why? Because we are not raised out of its shadow into the light of the Lord's countenance. That there is something naturally appalling in death, all must admit, for it is what all must feel. The very surroundings of the grave have in them something terrible to nature. The coffin, through whose lid we almost seem to see the pale corpse in its last shroud; the open grave into whose mouth we look as its dark and chilly bed- the earthy smell of the damp mold on which we stand, as if it breathed the very odor of death- the mourners in their weeping or subdued agony- the falling of the clods when all is over, the last prayer uttered, and every other sound stilled, and nothing now remains but to bury the dead out of sight- all these trappings of death, like the dark hearse and the funeral pall, speak so strongly to our natural senses, that to look through them, and beyond them, needs a special net of faith.

Apart, too, from these sights and scenes of woe, in which most of us have taken a perhaps never-to-be-forgotten part, there are internal causes why death casts at various times over the mind a chilling gloom. Unbelief, darkness of mind, guilt of conscience, the doubts and fears with which most are exercised; the natural apprehension of death, the innate love of, and clinging to life- the strong ties of flesh and blood, perhaps a young wife or little family for whom there is but slender provision; peculiar circumstances in business which need all the activity and skill of personal management, and without which wreck and ruin seem imminent- the place at present occupied in the church of Christ, with its binding claims; the desire to live a little longer for the glory of God and the good of his people- who can enumerate the thousand bonds which knit the heart to life, and produce a natural shrinking from death? But why else the need of Jesus on a dying bed? Who needs the support of everlasting arms but the sinking? Who needs the rod and the staff, but the traveler through the valley of the shadow of death? It is but reckless insensibility, or bold, presumptuous confidence, veiled under the name of strong assurance, which looks death in the face without shrinking, unless the Lord himself whispers, "It is I; be not afraid."

But how mercifully and graciously are these very exercises of mind overruled for spiritual good, and what a profitable influence do they often produce upon the heart. To die daily is a needful part of Christian experience. To have the loins girt, and the light burning, and to be waiting for the Master's return, is the most fitting posture of a disciple of Christ. We are especially warned to "take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares." (Luke 21:34.) It will be then our wisdom and mercy "not to sleep as do others, but to watch and be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation," in the sweet confidence that "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." (1 Thess. 5:8, 10.)

If he died for us that we should live together with him, he is "our life;" and so far as he is our life, the life which we now live in the flesh will be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. There is no other way of dying to sin, to the world, to the things of time and sense, and of living unto God. The deepest convictions may still leave us under the power of sin- the heaviest trials stir up only rebellion and fretfulness; the most distressing temptations only toss us up and down like the locust; and the acutest griefs cause only the sorrow of the world which works death. But one believing sight of the Son of God, one discovery of the King in his beauty, one manifestation to the soul of his Person and work, grace and glory, at once lifts it up to himself; and thus, while faith is in active exercise, bears it up above the world and all its sorrows as well as joys, its carking cares as well as all its passing vanities. To have a blessed revelation of Christ to the soul, and to enjoy union and communion with the Son of God, is the one grand secret of vital godliness.

But if it be so, and to this all the saints of God set to their seal, how is this personal, experimental knowledge of Jesus, this union, this communion with him, this living faith in his Person and work, to be maintained alive in the heart? O! Here is the grand fight of faith. On this narrow ground the hostile armies meet. Here unbelief, infidelity, guilt, doubt, and fear; pride, lust, and covetousness, rebellion, murmuring, and fretfulness; coldness, carnality, and death; sloth, torpor, and fleshly ease; enmity, filth, and devilism; darkness, desertion, and despair- here are they all ranged in their different regiments, but all under one flag- the black flag; and under one commander- the prince of hell. How slippery the ground with blood! What advancements, what retreatings, what hopes, what fears, what cruel wounds, what horrid sights, what faintness of heart, what almost certainty of defeat!

What, O what can the soul do but look up to the Captain of its salvation and implore his help? Who can save but He upon whom help has been laid, as one that is mighty? Timid soul! Is not this look, this cry, the very look, the very prayer of faith? The battle is not yours, but the Lord's- and is not he even now thus teaching your hands to war and your fingers to fight?

Now, as we are brought to this point, we see and feel our need of "the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." We beseech you, then, brethren, allow the word of exhortation from one who is indeed the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints; and yet one who earnestly desires your spiritual profit.

Our Lord is risen from the dead, and was thereby declared to be the Son of God with power. (Rom. 1:4.) And we, too, who believe in his name and have vital union with him, are risen with him; for God "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:6.) But what is our evidence of this? How do we know we are indeed risen with Christ? By the

communications of his grace; by the work and witness of his Spirit; by the discoveries of his Person; by the faith which lays hold of him; by the hope which anchors in him; and by the love which flows out towards him. What but a living Christ will do for a living soul? He is "the resurrection and the life;" so that "he that believes in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in him shall never die." (John 11:25, 26.) Let us not, then, tarry among the tombs. Why seek we the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen.

On this ground, then- the ground of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, would we address a few words to those living souls who are risen with Christ, and are setting their affections on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Let us, then, not in a spirit of dictation, but of brotherly love and affectionate counsel, drop a few words that may seem suitable to the present occasion. We assume that your soul is exercised on the weighty matters of eternity, that you are not settled on your lees or are at ease in Zion, still less have a name to live and are dead. To such we have no message, except it be a word of solemn warning, to consider in what a perilous position they stand. But to those whose souls are in any measure alive unto God, and who are willing to receive a word of exhortation from us, we would, in the love and spirit of the gospel, address such counsel as we would desire to lay up in our own heart for our own profit and direction.

1. The first point to which we would direct your thoughts is- the claim that the word of God has upon our study and attention. We live in a day of great outward religious profession, and yet of bold and rampant infidelity. Thus we are surrounded as if by two fires. On one side is the professor with the Bible in his hand, but with no one word of grace or truth in his heart; on the other stands the infidel with the Bible under his feet. But this would not so much matter to us, or at least would not be so dangerous, if we could merely look on as spectators, or pass indifferently by them, as we get through a crowd without troubling ourselves about what has collected it together. This, however, we cannot easily do; for our own heart is too much like a city without gates or walls, lying as it were open to every attack; and there is a traitorous party within, who are at league with every assailant without; so that had not the Lord built for himself a little citadel in the very center of the city for his own habitation, we would long ago have been sold into the hand of our enemies.

Where, too, these foes cannot prevail by open violence, they seek to overcome by subtlety and craft. Thus sometimes formality would persuade us to be satisfied with the mere letter of truth, with the bare doctrines of grace, without so much seeking and longing after the power; sometimes infidelity would urge us to give up both letter and power together. Difficulties also and objections sometimes present themselves which we cannot dismiss, and yet cannot answer. Reasonings, either from our own mind or accidentally met with in books or conversation, similarly force themselves upon our thoughts, the tendency of which is either to confuse our judgment, or assault and overthrow our faith. Thus we get puzzled and perplexed, envying the simple faith of those tender-hearted children of God who believe with all that childlike, confiding trust, which we so admire in them, yet cannot attain to ourselves.

Amid all this conflict of thought we see and feel how life is fast passing away; the things of time and sense slipping from under our feet- the world a scene of vanity and trouble; sin everywhere running down the streets like water; and, alas! what is worse, running through our own heart, ever grieving and defiling our conscience. How deeply, amid all this conflict and confusion, this hubbub of voices without and within all clamoring to be heard, we need a strong prop on which the soul may firmly lean, a directing light to shine before the feet- and as none can give us any help in this dark path, where "we often grope for the wall, like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes," we feel our urgent need of some strong and friendly hand to

guide us right and bring us safely through the tangled maze.

This we find, and find only in the word of God, as made life and spirit to the soul by Him who graciously inspired it. How safe, how sweet it is, after such restless tossings to and fro as we have described, to rest in the sure word of promise, and to take refuge in the two immutable things- the word and the oath, in which it was impossible for God to lie. (Heb. 6:18.) What a debt of gratitude, then, do we owe to the God of all grace for the gift of his holy word, to be to us this light, this prop, this guide. And how do we best show our appreciation of, our gratitude, for this divine gift? By binding it close to our heart- by searching it daily, as for hidden treasure- by studying it, and seeking to penetrate into its inmost mind and meaning, pith and marrow, spirit and power- not scuffling over it as a schoolboy over his task, or some drudge over her work- not reading it with a listless eye and wandering mind, glad enough to close its pages, and put it back on the shelf- but feeding upon the milk and honey, the meat and marrow, and sipping the cheering wine with which the Lord of the house has furnished his table.

The longest life, the most unwearied search, the deepest study of the Scriptures would leave us but learners still. How, then, can we expect to understand them, penetrate into their holy wisdom, have our heart and conscience brought under their influence and power, see their beauty and connection, feel the impress of God's authority in them, be cast into their heavenly mold, and believe, admire, and adore the voice of the Lord speaking in them to our inmost soul, unless we take some pains to make them our bosom friend and counselor? Take the word of God out of our hands and heart, and we wander in shadows of thickest night.

2. Connected with this daily study of the word of God, we should earnestly desire to be well established in the truth as it is in Jesus. How many in a profession of religion are "ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth;" while others, scarcely less numerous, are "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Not a novelty can show its face in the religious world- not a daring novice or presumptuous wretch put forth an old heresy under a new name- not a vile or damnable error can come flying abroad on the wings of the wind, but some are caught by and entangled with it. And who are sometimes the very first to entertain it, hug it to their breast, and move earth and hell to spread it? Why, some of our old Calvinistic professors, men and women who have sat under the sound of truth for years. These are "the unstable souls" whom erroneous men "lie in wait to deceive," and whom they love to beguile; especially if they have a little of this world's goods to fill their purse or gratify their pride. But what a lamentable sight it is to see old professors, who ought to be pillars of truth, rocking to and fro under the gusts of error, as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind; or hurled headlong into the very slough of some damnable doctrine.

And why? Because they were never rooted and grounded in the truth by the teaching and testimony, work and witness of the Holy Spirit. How needful, then, if we would escape such a dreadful downfall, it is to be well established in the truth- for these winds of error often blow with great violence, and from most unexpected and dangerous quarters. We need, then, ever to be drinking wisdom at the fountain-head; to be ever looking unto the Lord for his special teaching, and to get all that we have immediately from him.

The Lord Jesus is made unto us the wisdom of God, (1 Cor. 1:30,) and he communicates it by his Spirit and grace. We shall find, therefore, more and more that all our wisdom is in him and from him; and that every divine truth which he makes known with power to the soul testifies of him, and centers in him. His glorious Person, as Immanuel, God with us, is the object of our faith; and from him, as the glorious Sun of righteousness, every ray and beam of divine truth is shed abroad in the heart. He illuminates the written

word with the beams of his glory; he is the sum and substance of every doctrine, the ground and center of every promise, and the life and power of every precept. His divine Sonship, his finished work, his atoning blood, his justifying obedience, his death and resurrection, his ascension and glorification, his present advocacy and intercession at the right hand of the Father, his royal government, his universal presence and power, and his second coming in the clouds of heaven, all form the food of faith, without which it droops and languishes, and loses its activity, energy, and power. How needful, then, to be well established in the truth, that it may be our food and drink, and we be daily living in the realization, if not the sweet enjoyment of it.

But this will not be our abiding experience until deep necessity has made us feel how destitute before God, how needy before man, how naked before our enemies, how unable to live, how unprepared to die we are without a vital interest in, without an experimental knowledge of the truths of the everlasting gospel. What darkness there is in the mind, when the light of truth does not shine into the heart! What confusion in the thoughts when there is no clear view, no believing apprehension of the grace of the gospel; what unbelief when the Person and work, love and blood, presence and power of the Lord Jesus are out of sight! But as the precious truths of the everlasting gospel are brought near, and we, seeing light in God's light, embrace them in faith and affection, for faith works by love, they become the very food of our soul, our hope, our all. God did not send his dear Son to bleed and die for poor lost sinners that they should trifle with his bleeding, dying love, nor with their own immortal souls. God did not raise him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, that men should speculate and argue about doctrines in the letter, or neatly arrange them into a creed to be carried about in a pocket-book, or be hung up in the vestry like an old almanac. God did not send apostles and prophets to proclaim a glorious gospel, nor did he reveal it as with a ray of light in the Scriptures of truth, nor does he now raise up his own servants to preach the word of life, that some should oppose it, others despise it, and others hold it in unrighteousness.

The sun breeds maggots in an ash-heap, and draws up fever and pestilence from the noxious marsh; but the sun was not created for that purpose. So God sent his dear Son to save a chosen race, and that he might have a people in whom he should be eternally glorified. There will be maggots in ash-heap hearts, there will be pestilent doctrines in churches and congregations; but this is the abuse, not the use of gospel light. How bound then we are by every sweet constraint of his love to believe in his name, to look unto him, to live on him and unto him! But they cannot be enjoyed without another blessing, to which we would next call your attention.

3. A spirit of prayer and supplication given and maintained by the God of all grace. There is the closest and most intimate connection between every grace in the soul and the spirit of prayer in the breast. Indeed, the life of God in the believer's bosom sinks and rises, ebbs and flows in exact proportion to, in thorough unison with the incoming and outgoing of the Spirit of grace and supplication. Faith and prayer go hand in hand to the throne, mutually strengthening each other in their advance to the mercy seat. The more I have of the spirit of faith, the more I have of the spirit of prayer. Faith eyes the blessing, prayer pleads for its enjoyment; faith strengthens prayer to ask; prayer enables faith more firmly to believe; and their union brings the mercy into personal possession- "What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." (Mark 11:24.) When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; when Moses let down his hands, Amalek prevailed. (Exod. 17:11.)

But as this spirit of faith is easily damped, for even Moses, the man of God, could not hold up his hands long at a time, it will be our wisdom and mercy,

4. To avoid these things, which we know, from past experience, weaken faith and hinder prayer.

Entanglement in worldly matters, beyond what is absolutely necessary, is one of the surest hindrances to the life of God which can come across our path. Some of the family of God are so circumstanced in business or in their daily employment that they must necessarily have much to do with the world. But this will be neither their temptation nor their sin if they are not entangled in, nor overcome by its spirit. Joseph in the court of Pharaoh, Daniel as the first of the three presidents to whom a hundred and twenty princes gave their accounts, maintained not only their worldly position, but their divine grace. It is not then being in the world, but of the world in which the danger lies. Keep the world at arms' length, and it will not hurt you; allow it to embrace you, and you will soon yield to its seductive influence.

But, worldly professors are almost more dangerous than the world itself. Six days the world may claim your body, even though it may not entangle your heart. But the Lord's day is all for the soul. What then? Must we lose the Lord's day too? Must we sacrifice that day of days to the same worldly company and carnal spirit which have made the heart sigh and groan all through the week? Shall they follow us into the house of prayer, dodge us up and down in the chapel, haunt us in the vestry, and rob and plunder us in the very street? And yet, what are many places of worship but mere worldly assemblies? In dress, in deportment, in the merry faces, in the absence of all reverence and solemnity, in the levity of the pulpit, in the carelessness and listlessness of the pew, in the vain conversation before and after service, what difference is there between the sermon in the chapel and the lecture in the Mechanics Institute? Even when separate from such abominations, in places of clear doctrinal, experimental truth, there is often much to grieve the spirit, if not altogether to entangle the heart of the child of God.

Keep separate, then, you who value your own souls' good, from those worldly professors who are ever to be found where truth is preached. You will soon discover them by the way in which they will be felt to rob and plunder your soul. If you have heard with a little real feeling, and if your heart is softened and melted under the word, and your soul is in the sweet enjoyment of a blessing, or at least solemnized and impressed with the weight of eternal things, you will be robbed before you have gone a hundred steps, if you drop into conversation with one of these thieves.

Take then as much care of your blessing as you would of your purse in a London crowd- be as wary of your discourse as a modest female is of hers in a railway-carriage full of men. The Lord's day is yours and the Lord's; have it and keep it all to yourselves. His presence is worth having, his blessing worth cherishing, his love worth enjoying. Don't barter all these choice mercies away for a little chit-chat, even though your chatty friend sits in the same pew, praises the same sermon, and extols the same minister. And remember that the Lord's day does not end with the services. How sweet to go to bed with the savor of the day of the Lord on the spirit, and to lie down in the enjoyment of that rest of which the Sabbath is but a feeble type!

But we shall weary you with our long and prosy advice. Much, therefore, must be left unsaid which might well afford subject for our Address. But we cannot close without adding that we esteem it a favor and a privilege that we are again allowed to open the year with this friendly greeting to our numerous readers; and if we have, in so doing, rather seated ourselves in the teacher's chair, forgive us this wrong. We have only laid before you such things as we have ourselves proved the value of; and we desire to take to ourselves, if the Lord would enable, all the advice which we have given to you. May the blessing of God, which makes rich, rest on our pages; may the eyes of the Lord be upon us for good from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; and as we trust we desire his glory and his people's good, may he not deny

us the continual request of our lips.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,

The Editor

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