

WILL IT BE A YEAR OF BLESSING?

– 1898 –

DEAR FELLOW Pilgrims on the "narrow way" to the Heavenly Kingdom, we feel for you an earnest brotherly love and take this opportunity at the beginning of a new year to tell you of it, and to formally express to you our earnest wish that the year beginning may be a very happy and a very favorable one for us all – as new creatures in Christ Jesus. And we would fain say something that would be helpful in this direction. What shall we say?

We would remind you and ourselves that the amount of blessing that shall come to us each will depend almost entirely on the course we shall pursue in seeking those blessings. It will not depend on God; for he sets us at rest on that point, by assuring us in advance of his willingness to help and bless us, along certain lines which he has foreordained as the best and only proper ones. He thus throws the responsibility upon us. If we follow his directions we shall be blessed: to the extent that we shall neglect the Divine Counselor's instructions we shall surely fail of the blessings. It is thus that we are to obey the instruction, "**Keep yourselves** in the love of God." (Jude 21.) To those who thus obediently abide in God's love, the lights and the shades of life, its storms and its calms, its sorrows and its joys, are all blessings and helps onward and upward; – "Nearer my God to Thee."

Nor is it either reasonable or Scriptural to expect that the major portion of our path should be smooth and bestrewn with flowers of prosperity, while we follow in the footsteps of our dear Redeemer. We remember that his path was both rough and thorny, and if ours were very different we should feel sure that we were not walking in his footsteps. And if it were needful that he, the perfect one, should be disciplined and learn obedience by the things which he suffered, much more do we who are imperfect and seriously "out of the way" need to suffer in learning the

lesson of *obedience* to God, enduring the trials which would prove us to be "copies" of God's dear Son.

Beloved, the more thorough and warm our consecration, the greater will be the progress we shall be able to make in developing the fruits and graces of the spirit. Now what will most help us to be "fervent in spirit, [R2240 : page 3] serving the Lord?"

We answer, *faith!* Faith in the exceeding great and precious promises which God has given to us; and faith in God's testimony that the narrow way alone leads to the glory promised. Obedience naturally follows in the wake of such a faith. We believe, then act accordingly. Hence it is the wise course as well as the Scriptural one to keep in close touch with the Scriptures, God's presentation of the basis of our faith and hopes, the expositor of our shortcomings and the delineator of the perfection which we are to copy and as nearly as possible attain outwardly as well as in our hearts.

So, then, that the year 1898 shall be one of even more than usual progress and spiritual blessing to us all, we recommend that each of us give more attention than ever before to God's *promises* to us as his Church and to the *conditions* upon which they shall be made sure to us. To this end we commend Sunday meetings and mid-week meetings, where practicable, for our own help and for the helping of others by word and example. We advise also a continuance of the course recommended a short time ago – of reading alternately each Sunday our Lord's delineation of the graces which will insure his blessing (Matt. 5:1-16) and the Apostle [R2240 : page 4] Paul's description of the same graces summed up under the name Love. (1 Cor. 13:1-13.) We have heard from very many already blessed by these readings, and now we desire to *urge* all who are praying for and hoping for great blessings during the year beginning to *try* this simple prescription which the Great Physician of our souls has prepared for us. Where we have heard from scores that they have been blessed by this course during the past three months we hope to hear from

hundreds and thousands as being similarly blest during the year beginning.

Now another part of the prescription. Let us begin each day with prayer for wisdom and grace that we may serve the Lord acceptably and be a blessing to others and be blest ourselves: and let us close these morning prayers with the inspired petition – "***Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.***" (Psa. 19:14.) Then at the close of each day let us square our day's account with the Lord at his throne of grace: recounting so far as we are able its opportunities used and neglected, its victories won or its defeats, its self-sacrifices and its selfishnesses; – thanking God for the grace that helped in time of need and apologizing for all errors and defeats, craving forgiveness in the name and merit of our Savior and promising greater faithfulness and zeal by the Lord's grace the next day. And pray for us and all the interests of the truth and all the dear colaborers, as we also remember you and all the household of faith. These are straight paths for our feet and all those who take them will find them ways of pleasantness and paths of peace for their souls, however stormy the way for the flesh.
