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"THOU CROWNEST THE YEAR WITH THY GOODNESS."

– PSALM 65:11. – DEC. 30. –

WHAT MORE appropriate lesson could have been chosen for the close of the year! It is fitting that the Lord's people should continually keep trace of the mercies and blessings they enjoy – otherwise the pressure of the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches would so crowd in upon our minds and hearts as to cover from our observation and ultimately choke up completely the springs of divine grace, which, kept open, minister continually to our joy and refreshment in the holy spirit.

To this end it is appropriate that we have a daily review of the blessings we enjoy – that every evening we call to mind the privileges enjoyed, the providences which have guided our way, and the blessings, both temporal and spiritual, which have come to us; some of them in common with the world in general and others of a special kind, known too and appreciated by those only who know the Shepherd and are known of him; – who hear his voice and to whom the rod and staff, his chastenings and guidance, are continually a comfort and a joy.

It is appropriate, too, that we take weekly reviews, looking at the same mercies and blessings from a still broader standpoint of observation, reminding us of the rest into which we have entered through faith in the precious blood, and also of the rest that remains for the people of God, whereof God has given us assurance in that on the first day of the week he raised up Jesus from the dead. – Heb. 4:3,9.

But it is with special appropriateness that at the close of the still larger cycle of a year we should take a still broader and more comprehensive view of our experiences, looking circumspectly at the way we have traveled and considering well which have been the steps

which hindered progress, and which have been proper steps in the footprints of Jesus, bringing us nearer to the goal – the "mark" which we must surely attain if we would be accounted worthy of a share in the promised Kingdom.

A year may seem a longer or a shorter period, according to the circumstances. To the mind of childhood it is a very long period, while to more developed minds, filled with the activities of life, it seems much shorter – speeding all too rapidly to permit the accomplishment of all the things desired to be achieved. Then again, the year will seem proportionately long as it has contained draughts of bitter experience or sufferings, mental or physical; – proportionately short, as it has contained joys and pleasures which seem to slip away all too quickly. To a certain extent such experiences are common to all mankind; yet the Christian, especially if he have been for some time in the school of Christ and is somewhat developed both in knowledge and in grace, has a larger capacity than others for grasping and appreciating life; because, no matter how unsound his natural mind may have been, he has now "the mind of Christ," "the spirit of a sound mind," which is far better able than the natural mind to estimate matters at their true worth.

Such an advanced Christian looks back through the year and recalls life's storms as well as its sunshine, its sorrows as well as its joys, its tears as well as its smiles, and sorrows not as others who have no hope (but who, instead, have more or less of vague fear and dread of the future, both of present life and that which is to come). His troubles have been divested of their hobgoblin features, and minimized by the spirit of a sound mind, and the instructions of God's Word, which assures all such that the trials, difficulties and adversities of life, rightly accepted as lessons, are blessings in disguise, – which will work out "a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory" in the life to come. – 2 Cor. 4:16,17.

He will perceive too, that his joys have been of a purer and a more solid kind than any he ever knew before he was begotten of the holy spirit. They have not had commingled with them the bitterness of envy, malice and hatred, but have been unalloyed; because they have not been rejoicings in iniquity, but rejoicings in the truth. Moreover, they have been much more numerous than ever before; because he not only is able to joy in the Lord, joy in his Word, joy in the holy spirit, joy in fellowship with brethren of like precious faith, but by the grace of God he has been enabled additionally to joy in tribulation also; – not because he loved tribulation, but because he loved the patience, the experience, the character, which God assures us are a fruitage which all tribulations must yield us under his providence, if we are rightly exercised thereby. – James 1:3,4; Rom. 5:3.

Of whom are all these things true? Not of every man, surely, for alas! we know many who have no such experience – the world that lieth in darkness knows not God. Nor are these experiences true of all people of intelligence, – nominally Christians. Surely but comparatively few of those who profess the name of Christ enjoy these precious experiences, or will be able to look back upon the year with satisfaction of this kind, realizing that God has crowned the year with his goodness! Many who cannot rejoice in the goodnesses which we have enumerated foregoing, will nevertheless return thanks for temporal good things and mercies, and strive to peer into the darkness with which an insufficient knowledge and an insufficient faith enshrouds the trials and difficulties of life, which to them are incomprehensible and sources of no joy, and generally of little advantage; because they have not taken the necessary step of full consecration to the Lord, to bring them under his protecting care and under the enlightening influence of his Word through his spirit: or, having taken the step of consecration, they have not been performing their vows, but seeking to serve both God and Mammon, without pleasing either, and without receiving satisfactory blessings from either. **[R2737 : page 365]**

The class which can and does look back through the year from the standpoint that we have described – the class which looking back can see that God's goodness has crowned every feature of life throughout the year, is the "little flock," the true Church, whose names are written in heaven, – the Body of Christ, the Bride class. They are described by the Prophet in preceding verses of this Psalm. They are the true Zion, which shall shortly be set up, filled with divine glory, the joy of the whole earth, and the divine channel of blessing to all the families of mankind; "For out of Zion shall go the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Hear the Prophet: –

"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion:
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.
O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come!
Iniquities prevail against me: as for my transgressions,
thou shalt purge them away.
Blessed is the man whom thou choolest, and causest to
approach unto thee,
That he may dwell in thy courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
The holy place of thy temple."

Here we have a description of the elect Church, of which Christ is the Head, and all the faithful royal priests who, now fulfilling their vows of sacrifice, are companions in the sufferings of Christ, as by and by they shall be his companions also in the glory that shall be revealed. (Rom. 8:17,18.) They are God's choice, or his "elect," for, as the Apostle informs us, God has predestinated that this class whom he will choose shall all be copies of his Son. (Rom. 8:29.) They shall dwell in his house – they will be members of the great Temple which the Lord God is building of spiritual stones, in and through which he will bless the world with a knowledge of himself and his grace. – 1 Pet. 2:4-8.

Is it any wonder that these can rejoice in spirit, saying, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits"? "He hath put a new

song into my mouth, even the loving-kindness of our God." Is it any wonder that these looking back can see in the year that is past that that which has blessed and rejoiced them in every sense of the word has been of divine goodness, and that thus God has crowned the whole year with his favor toward them? These can say with faithful Joshua, "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake." – Joshua 23:14.

These are assured by their Lord that in the Father's house are many mansions, many conditions, suitable to the many kinds of his intelligent creatures; nevertheless there was no mansion for them, because they were to be of a new nature, "partakers of the divine nature," and hence it would be necessary for him to go away and "*prepare a place for them*" – a heavenly condition. These, knowing that they must be prepared for the place, as well as the place be prepared for them, are enabled to rejoice under every blow of the hammer of discipline, because they realize that it is a part of the Master's work in their preparation to fill the place to which they have been called in the Father's house – which will be the place of God's Temple, in which they are to be living stones. – Eph. 2:10.

And if the experiences and sentiments of this "little flock" are beyond the ken of the natural man, his neighbors and friends, is it any wonder? Despised and rejected of men, they are nevertheless God's royal priesthood; "as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold they live" – a life more abundant. In all these things they have cause to rejoice, realizing that the path in which they **[R2738 : page 365]** tread has in it the footprints of him who redeemed them and became the leader and forerunner of this priesthood. The world knows us not, even as it knew him not.

As we thus review the leadings of divine providence during the year that is past, let God's goodness and mercy stimulate our faith and confidence in him as respects the New Year coming in. A proper retrospect on the part of a proper child of God will enable him not only

to render thanks for the past, but to look up and lift up his head, realizing that our deliverance is nearer than when we first believed; and that he that began a good work in us is both able and willing to complete it, if we will but continue to submit our wills, our lives, our all, to his wisdom and loving care. – Rom. 13:11; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 5:5,6.
