

A New Year's Retrospect And Prospect

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A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 7, 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THE EVENING OF
NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1871.

"LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear." [Psalm 10:17](#).

IT has been sometimes said that a good Sabbath makes a good week. Sir Matthew Hale long ago said—

"A Sabbath well spent Brings a week of content," while George Herbert quaintly wrote—

"The Sundays of man's life Threaded together on Time's string,

Make bracelets to adorn the wife Of the eternal, glorious King. On Sunday, Heaven's gate stands ope, Blessings are plentiful and rife; More plentiful than hope."

Sunday is the market day of the week and if a man does well at market, he considers that he has done well for all the week. The Sabbath oils the wheels of the week—its bodily rest is useful, but its spiritual anointing is far more so!

Now, if that is the case, and I think it is, I might venture to say that a good first Sabbath in the year will go a long way towards making a good year. Very often things go on as they begin. It is very seldom that troubles come alone and it is still more seldom that mercies are given to us singly. We may always say, when we get a blessing, "Gad, a troop comes." So I would that we might receive a great blessing on this first Sabbath of another year, that a troop of blessings might follow on the heels thereof, and that a host of mercies might continue to come to us even till we reach the last day of the year— and then that we might begin, again, with new tokens of our Lord's loving kindness and tender mercy~

I thought our text might be a very serviceable Word of God for this first Sabbath evening in the year of Grace, 1871. It is intended to be of use, not only for tonight's sermon, but to be remembered all the year round. I think there is something in it which will render it suitable to all of us at all times during the next 12 months and, indeed, during the whole of the rest of our lives. We do not know, as we said in prayer just now, which way our pilgrimage may lead us, but I feel persuaded that, with this Inspired passage laid up in our hearts, if we make a right use of it, beneath the cover of Jehovah's wings we may go happily on from this place till again we pitch our tent upon the borders of another year.

Looking at the text, we may divide it into two parts. In the first portion, we have a very blessed fact—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." In the second part, we have two very blessed assurances—"You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear."

I. We will begin with what the text says about A VERY BLESSED FACT—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble."

I call this a very blessed fact, first, because it always has been a fact. In all ages and in all places, wherever there has been a humble heart that has lifted up its desire to God, the Lord has heard that desire! Whether Jew or Gentile, whether in the palace or in the poorhouse, whether in sickness or in health, whether in poverty or in wealth, whether in life or in death, no difference has ever been made—if the desire has been a humble one, from the first man who ever prayed down to this present time—God has always been ready to hear.

And, blessed be His holy name! It is not only an old fact, it is as much a fact, tonight, as it was when David first penned these words, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." At this very moment, God's ear is hearing the beating of your hearts. O humble Soul, Jehovah's heart discerns the throbbing of your desire though they are unexpressed in words! His eyes of fire, which pierce us through and through, are reading every longing desire of every anxious bosom here.

It is so now and it will be a fact all through this year, God will hear the desire of the humble. It is a fact of the olden times, but it is also a fact of present import and of the future, too. Notice how the Psalmist puts this fact—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." David does not say, "You have heard the prayer of the humble." He means that, but he also means a great deal more. Sometimes we have desires that we cannot express—they are too big, too deep—we cannot clothe them in language. At other times we have desires which we dare not express—we feel too bowed down, we see too much of our own unworthiness to be able to venture near the Throne of God to utter our desires—but the Lord hears the desire when we cannot or dare not turn it into the actual form of a prayer. I know you have sometimes said, "I wish I could pray like So-and-So." Often you have thought, "If I could only put a great many beautiful sentences together into goodly shape, then I might be heard." Do not talk so foolishly! If you cannot put two words together correctly, if your desire is right, God will hear the desire—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Uttered or unexpressed."

Prayer is not in the expression or the non-expression—prayer is the soul's sincere desire. The very heart of prayer is in the desire—the essence of the whole matter, the kernel of the nut—is the desire of the heart, not the utterance of the lips. Words without the desire are mere empty husks, but the desire, even without words, is sweet to God, and He accepts it. Can you catch the blessedness of this thought? I say again, before your desire takes a shape in which language could cover it, God will hear it!

You sometimes can hear people's desires, yourself. Many a mother hears her boy's desire. He has gone to sea, but before he went, his mother packed his box. She did not tell him all she put into it—there are some things there that he has not yet seen and he will not find

them till he searches to the bottom of the chest. How did she know that he would desire those things? Because she foresaw the position in which he would be placed and the needs which would arise in such a case—and she gathered, from that foresight—what her boy's desire would be. You have seen a poor hungry person shivering in the cold. If he has not accosted you and asked you for alms, yet you have heard the desire beating beneath that ragged coat and you have said to yourself, "That man needs help." You have heard his desire by just looking at him—his very silence seemed to speak to you of his great need. O Soul, God can hear your needs! Jehovah can hear your anguish! The Lord can hear what no one else can hear and what you cannot express!

I have always thought that to be a very clever way of begging, when a man sits down and huddles himself up at a street corner and just writes on the pavement with a piece of chalk, "I am starving." But perhaps it is quite as efficient a plea if the beggar does not write the words—but only if his face looks like starvation and his whole body appears emaciated with need and hunger. You know the man's desire from his very looks. And oh, how sweet it is to think that God looks down with a comprehensive glance, upon humble souls, takes in their whole condition and position with His compassionate eyes and hears their desire though they are unable or afraid to express it!

Notice, however, that David does not say, "Lord, You will hear the desire of the humble," but, "Lord, you have heard the desire of the humble. As soon as ever it was born, You heard it." You desire and God hears the desire at the same moment! No, let me correct myself and say that before it was a desire in your heart, God knew it would be there and He heard it. He had looked on you when as yet you had not looked on Him and, even then, it might have been truly said, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble."

What kind of a desire is it that God hears? He does not accept all desires. Some are trifling, some are vain, some are foolish, some are wicked and He is not pleased with such desires. It is the desire of the humble that the Lord hears. "Ah," says one, "I am afraid I am not humble." Brother, Sister, it is one mark of a truly humble man that he does not think himself humble. If you meet with a person who says he is humble, you may conclude at once that he is proud, for, usually, there is no boasting in the world that is so full of pride as the boasting of the man who talks of his humility! You humble? Ah, Sir, you need to be humbled a great deal before that will be the truth! The very man who mourns over his pride is, probably, the really humble man.

A humble desire, or the desire of a humble man, has this characteristic—the man knows there is no merit in his desire. If it is a good desire that he has in his heart, he feels, "It will be all through the infinite mercy of God if this desire is realized." He does not compliment himself and say, "Well done, Self, you have right desires in your heart—there is something good in you." No, but he fears lest the desire should not be sincere and, when it is deepest

and truest, he still strips himself of all rags of self-righteousness, for he cannot see any good, whatever, in the desire that is in his own heart.

A humble man does not desire anything of God for his own honor. He thinks too little of himself to wish to exalt himself and he longs, in all things, to glorify God. He desires his own salvation, but he knows that he does not deserve it, and he, therefore, gives God all the glory even while he rejoices in his own deliverance from going down into the Pit. He sings, with Toplady—

"Not to myself I owe
That I O Lord, am Thine.
Free Grace has all the shades broke through
And caused the light to shine.
Me You have willing made
Your offers to receive—
Called by the voice that wakes the dead,
I come to You and live."

A humble desire is one which leaves everything in God's hands. The man who has it, says, "Now, though I desire this, it may be it is not a right desire. Lord, I desire only to desire what I ought to desire! My desire is that Your desire should be written on my heart, that I may desire what You desire. Your will be done in my Soul, in my body, in my circumstances and in me, in all respects."

Now, beloved Friends, I think it will not be very difficult for you to see whether you have that desire of the humble which God hears. But to help you still further, let me give you some of these desires.

This is one of the desires of the humble—"Lord save me! I am lost unless Your mercy comes to my rescue. I am guilty! Forgive me! I have been an enemy to You! Reconcile me! I am diseased with sin! Heal me, for You are the only Physician!" I cannot hear your desires. Let me stop and listen as long as I may, I cannot hear the longings of anyone here who wants God to save him, but, oh, dear Soul, wherever you are and whoever you are, there is a better ear than mine that has heard your desire, and that ear belongs to One who will fulfill your desire! Surely, some of you are praying that prayer that I uttered just now—perhaps one who seemed least likely to offer it—God has dropped a hot coal of desire right into his bosom, right into her soul, and he or she is saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

That is one of the desires of the humble that God hears. I will suppose, however, that the Lord has heard that desire in your case and that He has graciously fulfilled it. Now I think I hear some humble soul saying, "Lord, save my children! Lord, convert my boys and girls! I have tried to train them up for You, but I dare not hope that any teaching of mine will be effectual for their salvation unless You put Your hand to the work." I cannot hear the beating of your hearts as you plead for your children. I cannot hear the wife's desires as

she inwardly cries, "Lord, save my husband!" Neither can I hear that Sister's longing as she says within her spirit, "O Lord, let my sister live before You! May my brother learn to know Christ!" But, though I cannot hear those desires—and no human being can hear them—God hears them! "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." Make yours a large desire, beloved Friends! Take in all your kinsfolk, take in mine, take in my hearers, take in all this congregation, take in this city of London and let the desire go up that God would save tens of thousands of souls, for He will hear the desire of the humble!

Another desire should be this—"Lord, guide me aright this year!" The young man who feels the force of his passion, should pray, "Lord, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil!" The merchant who knows the deadening influence of the cares of this world, should cry, "Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word!" The housewife who looks forward to, she knows not what, of trouble in the family—a suitable prayer for her is, "Let Your Grace, O Lord, be always sufficient for me! Guide me, O Lord, lead me in a plain path! Direct my footsteps and let me, this year, walk in holiness!" I say again, I do not know who is breathing that petition. I hope many of you are doing so, but there is One sitting in the highest heavens, hearing the songs of cherubim and seraphim, who yet condescends to hear the desire of the humble when it takes such a form as this.

I think I know some of you, tonight, who are saying, "Lord, glorify Yourself in me!" I do hear that desire in one heart here, I can hear it in my own heart. And God hears it, I trust, in many others. The Sunday school teacher is saying, "Lord, honor Yourself in my class this year! Bring my boys, my girls, to the Savior's feet." You who are preachers are saying, "Lord, glorify Yourself in our ministry. Give us many souls that shall be our crown of rejoicing, but Your Glory forever!" You who have not had any particular form of duty are saying, "Lord, give me something to do this year! Do not let me be an idler—suffer me not to be a barren tree—get honor to Yourself out of me this year, I beseech You!" Now, wherever such a desire is going up, God hears it! I trust, also, that you are not only desiring God's Glory through yourself, for, if so, that may not be a humble desire, but that you are also desiring God's Glory through all His servants. Let this be your petition, "O Lord, prosper every minister of Christ, every Sunday school teacher, every visitor of the sick, every tract distributor, everyone who is doing anything for You! O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! O send out Your Light and Your Truth! Let multitudes of sinners be saved!" If that is your heart's desire, be thankful that God hears the desire of the humble this night and be earnest in presenting that desire at the Throne of Grace.

Now I will leave this first part of my subject. I really think there is much in it which, while it causes you joy as you think of it this evening, may also cause you joy tomorrow and every other day in the year. Suppose you are in a workshop and cannot kneel down to pray—you can desire and God will hear that desire even if it is not expressed in words. Perhaps you work where there are ungodly men and you cannot vocally offer your petition

to the Lord. If so, you can desire. Therefore, thank the Lord that He hears the desire of the humble. Whatever can stop my voice, nothing can stop my heart's desire! I can go on desiring and, Glory be to God, He will go on hearing the desire of my heart!

Now we must pass on to the second part of our subject, TWO VERY BLESSED ASSURANCES—"You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear."

The first assurance is this, "You will prepare their heart." Turn this declaration into a prayer, "Lord, prepare my heart!" We ought all to make some sort of preparation for coming days as far as prudence suggests and circumstances allow. There is a laying up in store for a rainy day that every sensible man will make as far as he is able, but, Brothers and Sisters, the best preparation for the future lies in having a prepared heart! If you get all else prepared, but the heart is not, you have left the major part undone. But if the heart is prepared and a good deal else, unprepared, things may yet come right in the end. All gets right when the heart is right. Out of the heart are the issues of life and those issues of life are true and good when the heart is right. God only can prepare the heart for that which is right—He alone can prepare it for holy living, for happy dying—and for eternity! I want you to get hold of this assurance as a promise for you all through this year, "You will prepare their heart." How shall we understand this expression?

First, God will prepare the heart of the humble to receive Christ. "Oh," says one, "I do not feel fit to come to Christ." All the fitness that is needed, God will give you. "You will prepare their heart." You need to be empty, to be broken, to be wounded—all this, the Spirit of God will work upon your conscience by the operation of the Law of the Lord. Do not stand back from Christ because you are unprepared to come to Him. God will prepare you for Christ as He has already prepared Christ for you.

Next, "You will prepare their heart" to receive more of Christ. Those of us who have had Christ as our hope and our trust want to get more of Him. I should be very sorry if I thought that, this year, I should not learn something more of my Master than I have known before. I should think it a dreary year if it should pass over my head and I should have no fresh instruction concerning the beauties of His Person and the excellence of His Character. Oh, that we might all receive Christ more fully into our heart! The heart needs sweeping, cleaning and preparing—and here is the promise that this work shall be Divinely performed! "You will prepare their heart." Not only for Grace, but for more Grace, will God prepare the heart of the humble!

This year, dear Brothers and Sisters, we shall need heart-preparation for the many duties we shall have to perform for God. Look forward to them with trust in God. Those who examine the palms of the hand and pretend to foretell the future are fools! Those who believe them are not wise. We cannot tell what a day may bring forth, but we know that every day will bring its need of service. Well then, God will prepare our hearts for it. "You will prepare their heart." I like to think that nothing shall come for me to do but God will fit me for it. I

may be called to a work that I have never attempted before. If so, I shall have Grace given which I never had before! You may change your condition of life this year, my dear Friend, but you shall be prepared for that change! You may have to emigrate to the other side of the world and find fresh

duties awaiting you there—but you shall be prepared for your new sphere of service. You may be called from being a servant to be a master, or you may have to come down in the world and from being a master, you may have to become a servant, yet, whatever God shall put before you to do, He will prepare your heart for it. Only plead this declaration in prayer and you may expect to have it fulfilled!

In addition to our active service, there may be and probably will be, for many of us, a great deal of passive service—we may have to endure suffering this year. Poverty may fall upon some who are now in a comfortable position in life. Bereavement may make a widow of that smiling sister, or that happy father over yonder may be left childless. Before the year has run its course, who of us may have to toss upon the bed of sickness by the month, together? Who may be slandered? Who may be persecuted? It is not for us to know, but here is something we may know—"You will prepare their heart." It is wonderful how God gets His people ready for trouble when it is coming. You remember what Solomon said about the wise woman? "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet." She has made such warm garments for them that she says, "Let the snow come if it likes. They are prepared to resist the cold." So God's wisdom and Grace will clothe us all with such warm garments of consolation that, when trouble comes, we shall be fully prepared to bear it. For duty, or for suffering, "You will prepare their heart."

And ah, this year, some of us may have to die. Many of our members passed away last year. Some dear sweet souls—the very pick of this Church—were taken up to Heaven. It may be my lot, it may be your lot, dear Brother or Sister, to go Home this year, but we will fall back on this gracious assurance, "You will prepare their heart." Why, it seems to me that if I can keep this Word of God in my heart and on my tongue all this year, nothing shall be able to disturb me! I shall be like the man of whom it is written, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings—his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." "You will prepare their heart" and, therefore, they shall not be afraid of all the enemies that can come against them! You shall not be afraid of sickness, of famine, or of death, itself, for God will prepare your heart to meet it! Slip aside, now and again, during this year, when an unexpected trouble comes, and say, "Lord, prepare my heart for this sorrow!" When you meet with a strong temptation that comes all of a sudden, hasten away into some quiet corner and pray, "Now, my Master, prepare my heart to resist this assault of the adversary!" He will keep your sword sharpened for you! He will have your shield well bossed for you! He will keep you strong, He will keep you happy, He will keep you blessed, He will prepare your heart!

Now for the last part of my text. You do not know, perhaps, that I have a license to keep on as long as I like, to-night, for my pulpit clock has stopped! I am obliged to look round to see how the time flies. Before I close, I should like to say a little about this last part of my subject, the second blessed assurance—"You will cause Your ear to hear." I think, Brothers and Sisters, that this preparation of the heart means, in the first place, that God will prepare His people's hearts to pray and then He will cause His ear to hear their prayers. But I will take it out of its connection for just a minute or two.

"You will cause Your ear to hear." I understand by this phrase that the Lord will hear us soon. Sometimes, when we pray, the answer does not come directly. Pray again, Brother, Sister, for if God has not caused His ear to hear, yet, He will cause His ear to hear! The answer to your prayer shall come speedily. Do not postpone your expectations too long. Prepare to wait if God tarries, but be prepared for the reply if He does not tarry. Some Christians do the first, but not the second—they seem so ready to wait that God makes them wait! Oh, prepare with such vigor and earnestness, when you are pleading for your own salvation, or for the salvation of others, that God shall make haste and at once cause His ear to hear! He will hear you soon—expect, during this year, many speedy answers to your prayers!

"You will cause Your ear to hear." That means, next, I think, that the Lord will always hear us. He will, as it were, exert Himself to hear your supplication. "You will cause your ear to hear." This is a blessed Word of God for this new year! My God, how earnestly I will pray, now that I know I have Your ear! I remember that dear Mr. Cowper said, when he was in despondency and distress, writing to Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnell, "You have advised me to pray, but there is no reason in the world in my praying, there is no passage of Scripture that gives me any right to pray." He was, of course, insane at the time. Yet he said, "If there were such a text, I would never leave off praying as long as I lived. You tell me that Jonah prayed in the whale's belly, but I am in a worse plight than he was in. If I were only as bad as Jonah was, I would pray to God night and day."

I catch at that thought—if I am permitted to pray, then I will pray. And if I may have whatever I ask of God in the name of Jesus, oh, I will ask! Do use your privilege in praying to the Lord, for He will cause His ear to hear. If you had the

ear of the great ones at court and could get whatever you liked, I am sure that you would use the privilege! And now that you have the ear of the great King of Kings, O you intercessors, you who are the Lord's remembrancers, plead with Him day and night "and give Him no rest till He establishes, and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth," for He will cause His ear to hear you! The Lord will always hear you, Sinner, if you call upon Him! He will soon hear you—He will effectually hear you.

When it is said, "You will cause Your ear to hear," does it not mean that the Lord will so hear as to answer our petitions? As a Church we have prospered by prayer. Glasgow flourished by the preaching of the Word and the Tabernacle has flourished by the prayers

of Believers. That has been the secret of our strength! Therefore let us still believe in the efficacy of prayer. God listens to the voices of His children. He regards the cry of the humble. He is moved by the desires of His own people. Let us, then, during this year, be more in prayer than ever! Let us pray in faith, pleading the precious blood of Jesus and the promises of God's Word. And let us hear the Lord saying to us, "Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning My sons and concerning the work of My hands, command you, Me." There is need of a great revival of religion—the wave of the late revival has gone and now we need another. We have had a long winter, spiritually—we need to have an awakening springtime, a glorious summer and a golden autumn in the Church. Let us pledge ourselves to pray for it—and not merely pledge ourselves, but really pray! Let us cry mightily till the Lord shall hear us and bring in tens of thousands who shall be the reward of the Savior's sufferings and death! The Lord bless you, dear Friends, and make this year to be very rich in fruit-bearing to God's Glory in every one of us!

And as for such as were not saved when they came into the Tabernacle this evening, I trust that God will, this very night, make them desire to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—and He will hear their desire and lead them to look to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! As we who love the Lord come to the Communion Table, we can use our text, for I am sure the desire of the humble is that they may see Christ in the Supper. "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will prepare their heart." Oh, it is sad to go to the Lord's Table with an unprepared heart! Lord, prepare our heart to come to Your banqueting table, tonight and then, "You will cause Your ear to hear." You will grant us Grace to feed upon Christ and to be satisfied! May it be so to every communicant! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM103.

One's heart naturally turns to this passage when one desires to magnify the Lord. It is specially suitable for a New Year's meditation.

Verse 1. Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Come, my Soul, wake up! Bestir yourself! You have great work to do, such work as angels do forever and ever before the Throne of God. Let no power or faculty exempt itself from this Divine service! Come, my memory, my will, my judgment, my intellect, my heart—all that is in me, be stirred up to magnify and bless His holy name! "Bless the Lord, O my Soul"—for the music must begin deep down in the center of my being—it must be myself, my very self, that praises God!

2. Bless the LORD, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits. This shall be the first note—"We love Him because He first loved us." We have not to go abroad for materials for praise, they lie at home. Forget not all His benefits to you, my Soul—His overwhelming,

His innumerable benefits which have to be summed up in the gross as "all His benefits"—forget them not!

3. Who forgives all your iniquities. Come, come, my Soul, can you not praise God for sin forgiven? That is the first note, and it is the sweetest note in our song of praise. "Who forgives all your iniquities"—not some of them but the blessed Scapegoat has carried into the, "No man's land of oblivion," the whole mass!

3. Who heals all your diseases. He is the Physician for you, my Soul—your diseases are the worst of all diseases, for they would drag you down to Hell if they were not cured. But Jehovah Rophi heals all your diseases!

4. Who redeems your life from destruction. Oh, my Soul, praise God for redemption! If you cannot sing about anything else, sing of Free Grace and dying Love. Keep on ringing those charming bells.

4. Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. What? Can you wear a crown and not praise Him who placed it on your head? Can you wear such a crown as this, made up of loving kindness and tender mercies, and not bless the Lord? Oh, let it not be so! Let us each break forth in spirit in one song, tonight, and say, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

5. Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Heavenly feasting on heavenly bread! Divine satisfaction from the finished work of Christ! Oh, my Soul, pray to God to give you new life, tonight, so that your youth may be renewed, so that your wing feathers may grow, again, and that you may mount as eagles do! Surely, dear Friends, this little list of mercies, so small in number, contains an immensity of mercy! Let us bless the Lord for every one of them.

6. The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. Let the poor and the down-trodden sing unto the Lord. He will take care of you! He is the Executor of the needy and the Executioner of the proud. "The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

7. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel. Therefore, let us bless Him, the God of Revelation, who does not hide Himself from His creatures, but who makes known His ways and His acts unto His people! An unknown God is an unpraised God, but when He shows Himself to His people, they cannot refrain from blessing His name.

8. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Praise Him for this! Bless His name at every single mention of His Divine attributes. Let your hearts beat to the music of praise tonight!

9. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever. Let the afflicted praise Him! Let the downcast and the despondent sinner praise Him! If he cannot sing about anything else, let him bless the name of the Lord that He will not keep His anger forever.

10. He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Let us thank God we are not in Hell—we are yet on praying ground and on pleading terms with Him. Some of us will never go into Perdition, for He has saved us with an everlasting salvation. Truly, if we did not bless Him, every timber in this building and every iron column beneath this roof might burst out in rebukes for our ingratitude! We must bless His name!

11. For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. Look up into the blue sky—up, up beyond the stars and say to yourself—"So great is His mercy." Let us, therefore, praise Him accordingly. "Loud as His thunders, shout His praise and sound it lofty at His Throne."

12. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. There is neither latitude nor longitude for praise. God's Grace is boundless! Let us, therefore, unstintedly praise Him.

13. Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. He has a tender heart. He never strikes without regret, but His love always flows freely. No father or mother is half so mild and loving as is the Lord of Hosts!

14. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. Our bodies are but animated dust and even our souls might be compared to dust in His sight. Not iron or granite, but we are mere dust. It is a wonder that men live so long when there are such mighty forces, even in Nature, arrayed against them. Who can control earthquakes and volcanoes? And when men Cross the sea in times of storm, it is a wonder that they come to land, again!

15. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. You are like the primrose by the river's brim, or the buttercup and the daisy in the field that is visited with the scythe. That is all we are—not cedars, not oaks, not rocks—but flowers of the field.

16. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. Some of the hot winds of the East come over a meadow and it is immediately burned up. I have seen the fairest and loveliest flowers look, in a short time, as if they had been burned with a hot iron when the Sirocco had blown across from Africa—and such are we. We speak of the breath of the pestilence—it is but a puff of wind—and we are gone.

17. 18. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His Commandments to do them. "But"—and this is a blessed, "but." "But the mercy of the Lord"—that is not a fading flower, that is not a withering wind—"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." Here are ten thousand blessings in one! You have everlasting mercy,

Covenant mercy. Oh, if we do not praise God when we think of the Covenant, what has happened to us? We must be possessed with a dumb devil if we do not praise the name of Him whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting!

19. The LORD has prepared His Throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom rules over all. Now, children of a King, will you go mourning all your days? You that dwell in the Light of His Throne, will you not be glad? Rejoice, O Zion, for your King lives and reigns forever! "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice."

20. Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. "Bless the Lord, you His angels." We cannot do it well enough, but help us, then, you angels that excel in strength. Put out all your strength when you praise Him, "you that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." Your actions are your praises, O you angels! Would God that we had learned to do His commandments as you do them! We are praying for this, even as our Lord taught His disciples to say, "Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven."

21. Bless you the LORD, all you His host; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure. All living things, and all the forces and powers of Nature are calling upon men to praise the Lord! And all the hosts of God, the organs of Omnipotence, ring out the grand chorus, "Bless you the Lord."

22. Bless the LORD, all His work, in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my Soul. I must not go grumbling up to Heaven, nor stumbling among the works of God. I must gratefully come to Him and, myself, praise Him! And so, with the Psalmist, I cry, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul."