

R4100 - "THOU CROWNEST THE YEAR WITH THY GOODNESS"

--`PSALM 65:11`.--DECEMBER 29.--REVIEW.--

1) INTERESTING as it is to review the lessons of the year, reaching from the Creation to the boyhood of Samuel and the beginning of the epoch of the kings of Israel, we leave that to individual effort and consider here the beautiful golden text of the International lesson.

2) When we remember Father Adam's disobedience and that he justly came under the sentence of death therefor, and that in consequence ourselves and all of his posterity share his imperfections and dying conditions as we share the blessings of life through him, we have cause for gratitude toward God for endurable conditions of whatever kind he may be pleased to permit us to experience. From this standpoint every blessing is an unmerited favor, whether small or great, for we deserve nothing, all of our rights having been forfeited. Hence, as members of the world we should feel ourselves at the close of the year impelled to look up to the Creator and to confess that we have received at his hands numberless mercies and blessings which we could not claim by right or desert. For not only are we under condemnation through heredity, but we realize that individually we are unworthy of divine favor, for, as our Episcopal friends express it, "We have all done those things which we ought not to have done and have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us." It is appropriate, therefore, that the world, which the Apostle speaks of as the "groaning creation," should be exceedingly thankful to God for the blessings they enjoy, even though these have not been unmixed with bitter disappointments and sorrows and tears.

3) But if the natural man has cause for gratitude to God, much more have we, the children of God through the adoption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Do we not enjoy all the blessings which the world enjoys? and have we not the same call as they to thankfulness? And, in addition, is it not true that God has done for us exceeding abundantly more than we could have asked or thought according to the riches of his grace? (Eph. 3:20.) How profitable it is for us to turn our minds backward and note the steps by which divine grace has led us to our present station, in which we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. When we were without strength and without merit Christ died for the ungodly, including us. We are amongst the favored ones who heard of the grace of God; we are amongst the comparatively few whose ears and eyes of understanding were opened to a realization of the Lord's grace and truth; we are amongst the still fewer number who, having heard, were enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and who appropriate the blessing to ourselves. We are amongst the still fewer number who received not the grace of God in vain, but under the guidance of the Word and Spirit of the Lord presented their bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, their reasonable service.

"Oh, happy day, that fixed my choice
On thee, my Savior and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice
And tell its raptures all abroad."

4) The Apostle says of himself, "If others have somewhat whereof to boast, I more." And so we see in general that if the world has something to boast of in respect to God's gifts and blessings, and something for which they may be thankful, we more--we who are in Christ Jesus, who have tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and been made partakers of the holy Spirit, we may rejoice abundantly. We may be glad even in the house of our pilgrimage --even though here we have no continuing city, no abiding place, no security, but are buffeted by the world, the flesh and the Adversary continually. The Lord, our great Deliverer, is on our part; his promises, exceeding great and precious, are our support and consolation. We have laid hold upon one who is mighty to save; yea, more, he has laid hold upon us, or, as the Apostle expresses it, "we have been apprehended of Christ Jesus." (`Phil. 3:12` .) Neither will he let us go so long as our hearts are loyal to him. Only the wilfulness which would take our interests out of the divine keeping could in any sense of the word separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

5) Let all of this class review the year, especially from the spiritual standpoint, to note what progress each of us has made in spiritual growth, in grace, in knowledge, in love--the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit. In proportion as these are large let us rejoice; in proportion as they are small let us lament the fact, yet not to the degree of discouragement or surrender to the enemy. Let us hear the Master's voice saying, "Fear not, I have overcome the world," "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in your weakness."--`John 16:33`; `2 Cor. 12:9` .

6) Reviewing the year in its temporal blessings and mercies and privileges and favors, and in its spiritual opportunities and strength and knowledge and development in character-likeness of our dear Redeemer--while rejoicing in all these, let us say to ourselves in the words of our text that the crowning of the year with blessings is in the divine goodness. The Lord would not have us understand that he does everything for us so that we have nothing to do for ourselves, but he does give us clearly to understand that all of our doings would accomplish nothing without his aid--that our efforts and strivings are profitable in their results only as they have the divine favor and blessing. God's goodness is the crowning of the year for us. We are glad at its close to remember how good he is, how generous, how sympathetic, how compassionate, how loving and kind--especially to the household of faith. To these alone he has exhibited or sent messages of his grace and peace as yet, but we are glad to see in his Word that soon the New Covenant will be inaugurated and its message of forgiveness will go forth in trumpet tones, a Jubilee message to the world of mankind that they have been ransomed by the precious blood which seals the New Covenant and which makes possible to them the "times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." (`Acts 3:21` .) We rejoice, then, not only in our own favor and blessing, but also in the coming blessings, all of which we recognize to be of, by and through divine goodness. Our Lord Jesus was the great channel of this divine goodness, through whom it reaches us who are his followers, the adopted members of his Body. We are thus permitted to come into relationship with him, so that we also shall become channels for the dispensing of the divine goodness ultimately to natural Israel and to all the families of the earth.