

THE RIGHT KEYNOTE FOR THE NEW YEAR

NO. 2289

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD.”
Psalm 115:18.

IT has been truly said that if the members of our churches were in a right condition of heart, the work of the pastor towards them would be no more difficult than that of a commanding officer to his troops. A general, or a captain has never to study eloquence—he has simply to give the word of command tersely and plainly—and himself to lead the way. So, if our hearts were right in the sight of God, we would not need illustrations to win attention or arguments to urge us on—we would only need to know what is the special duty of the hour and, helped by the Divine Spirit—we would, with alacrity, seek to perform it.

Well, now, let us hope that this is our condition tonight! God grant that it may be! Certainly it ought to be our condition in reference to the duty which is taught us in the text. I shall but, as it were, give the word of command in my Master's name—and I trust that the Holy Spirit will be working in all our spirits, causing each one of us to say, “Ready, yes, ready, to bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord.”

You noticed, while we were reading the Psalm, that it contained a piece of cutting sarcasm upon the gods of the heathen which are unable to do anything for their worshippers. Albeit that they have the outward semblance of the organs of life and sense, yet in those organs there is neither life nor power. Their mouths cannot speak; their eyes cannot see; their ears cannot hear; their noses cannot smell; their hands cannot handle; their feet cannot walk. But our God is declared to be the living God who is in the heavens and who has done whatever He has pleased. Well, that being so, a living God should be worshipped by a living people in a living manner!

This is one of the rules of Christian worship which we should never forget. Let us come before the Lord, not as mere bodies, fancying that it is enough to put in an appearance in the place where prayer is known to be made, but let us bring our living selves, our souls, our hearts, into God's worship—and whether it is in prayer, or in praise, or in the proclamation of His Truths, or in the listening to the Gospel message—let us do it with all our life! Let the praise be full of life! Let the prayer be full of life! Let the ministration of the Truth of God be the lively oracle of the living God! And let the ear, the *heart's* ear, be all alive while we listen to the Gospel!

There is nothing more that is acceptable to God in the *mere routine* of Christian worship than there is in the turning of the windmills of the Tartars, when they put their prayers upon the mill and they revolve with the blowing of the wind! If true life is absent from our service, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though we have the richest music, though we have everything that heart can devise to create a charm, yet it profits us *nothing*, and brings no Glory to God. “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,” is a text which may be applied to dead services as well as to dead men. May the Lord, in mercy, send to some religious services a resurrection! May He be pleased to put a living heart and soul into them, for if there are not these, He will not accept a dead sacrifice at men's hands! A living God must be worshipped in a living way by a living people!

In the context we see, also, that as it is true with the heathen's idols, that, “they that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusts in them,” so ought it to be with us in reference to our God. A living God should have a living people and a blessing God should have a blessing people. He has blessed us with unspeakable favors. He is always blessing us! It is not possible for us to compute the amount of blessing which He is constantly bestowing upon us. Therefore, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” If He exalts you with His favor, take care that you exalt Him with your praise. If He enriches you with His blessings, bring your blessings and offer them at His

feet, as the wise men brought their gold and frankincense and myrrh and laid them as tribute at the feet of the newborn King. Bless a blessing God! What can be more congruous? As the echo answers to the voice, so let our blessing of God answer to the blessing we have received from God, even as Paul puts it, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.”

This, then, is the work that is to occupy us tonight, and the work in which we shall continue, I trust, from this time forth and forevermore. Living unto the living God, time and eternity will be spent in blessing the blessing God.

Notice, in the text, which is clearly intended to excite us to praise, first, *a mournful memory*, suggested by the word “but.” Secondly, *a happy resolution*—“we will bless the Lord.” Thirdly, *an appropriate commencement*—“from this time forth.” And then, fourthly, *an everlasting continuance*—“and forevermore. Praise the Lord.”

I. First, then, there is in the text the trace of A MOURNFUL MEMORY. Read the preceding verse, without which we do not get the sense of this one to the fullest. “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth.”

The mournful memory is that of those who, at one time praised the Lord with us, and exulted in His holy name during the past year, some have been numbered with the dead. There are gaps in our ranks, my Brothers and Sisters, which death has made during the past year. Some have been taken from us whom we could ill spare, as we thought, but they were, nevertheless, needed up above. He who bought them had a better right to them than we had and His prayers prevailed over ours, as they always should. We said, “Father, we will that they whom You have given us be with us where we are.” But Jesus prayed, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” And they have gone. He had the best right to them and we can only say, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” But, as far as this world is concerned, they who have been taken from us do not praise the Lord, save that, being dead, they speak by the recollection of their holy lives. And their memory is sweet, like incense that has been burned, and leaves a perfume behind. Save for this, “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.”

I know that in Heaven they are praising Him! They have been added to the orchestra above and have helped to make it complete. Fresh songsters are there before the everlasting Throne of God, but here they cannot swell our praises. Their bodies sleep beneath the green sward in the silence of the tomb. As I look round the different parts of the Tabernacle—my eyes being better able to distinguish the gaps than some of yours are because I rather know something of all, and each of you knows but a part of this great congregation—as I look around, I notice where sat one whose eyes were full of glances of delight whenever the name of Jesus was mentioned. I have heard him speak in his Master’s praise most sweetly and yet tearfully, but I shall never hear him here again. I looked into his tomb but a few days ago. He has gone down into silence so far as his body is concerned.

There was another dear worker who was always here, I might say that he was always everywhere where there was anything to be done for Christ! And we went to his grave, also, and we laid him in the silent tomb. During the year I suppose some 70 or 80 of our number have gone over to the majority—I mean, 70 or 80 of those who were actually members of the Church, besides those who, I trust, loved the Lord, although they had not confessed His name in Baptism and united with His people in Church fellowship. They have gone over to the great host above—and there are so many the fewer here. Well, what does this say to us? I will not imitate Dr. Watts, and say—

“Hark, from the tombs a doleful sound!”

I think we hear too many doleful sounds from the tombs. But I hear a lively, earnest sound, and it says, “Brothers and Sisters, keep up the song of praise unto the Lord! Do not let the music falter. Our voices are gone from among you—sing, therefore, each of you, the more sweetly and loudly to make up for our absence from the earthly choir.”

Now that so many saints have gone Home, *there are so many the fewer on earth to praise the Lord*. O you who have recently come into the Church, you who have been baptized for the dead to fill up the gaps in our ranks, be earnest, with your loud hosannas, to bless and magnify the name of the Lord! Brethren, let us take a blessed revenge on Death, and if he takes from our numbers, let us, as God helps us, increase the real efficiency of the Church by each of us endeavoring to become double what we formerly were in the service of our Master! O Death, you have struck down a songster who used to sing at my side, but my voice shall be louder than before! I will make music for us both and there shall yet come another to fill his place! And so there shall be *three* songs instead of two—and God shall be a gainer on earth *and* a gainer

in Heaven by the loss which death seemed to cause to Christ's Church! They are going, one after another, my Brothers and Sisters. They are gathering homeward one by one. The most useful, the most mighty in prayer, the most holy, the very pillars and strength of the Church are going and, as a Brother said the other day, "When so many good ones are going, what can we do better than pack up and go with them?" As each one goes, we feel almost inclined to say what the disciples said concerning Lazarus, "If he sleeps, he shall do well." And to add, with Thomas, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

But I am of another mind and I say, "No, if there are so many going, let us ask to be allowed to *stay*, for this great fight has to be fought out somehow and, if some of the troops have fought the good fight, and exchanged the sword and shield for the palm branch and the harp, let us who are left pray with all our might unto the Lord God of Hosts to strengthen us in this day of battle, that we may not go till we have finished our part of the fight and have been the means of calling others to prolong the blessed struggle by which victory shall be given to the name of Christ."

By the thought, then, of the many dead who cannot any longer praise God among us, let us be stimulated to bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore!

There comes up in my mind, however, another reflection, that, as others are gone, *we, ourselves, shall also go soon*. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." O Brothers, if we are called to preach, it is only for a little while! We have not an indefinite period in which to be wise to win souls. Our work must be done soon or it will never be done! O teachers, you must win your children for Christ soon, for you are not to live a thousand years to go on seeking the little ones! They must be brought to Jesus soon or they will not be brought by you, for you will have passed away! O all you Christian people who love your Lord, be busy in those sacred works which can only be performed on earth, for angels cannot clothe the naked or feed the hungry! No angel can be a Dorcas to make garments for the poor. These things are for *this* life—these modes of praising God are only for *time*—there are others for *eternity*. These are for this life and to these we have to attend as long as we are here.

To keep the Church of God on earth, the Church *militant*, in good marching order, and good working condition, and so to glorify God *here* is what we must do *now*, and do it soon, for, "the night comes when no man can work." I wish we all felt more that we are dying men. The sound of the chariot wheels of eternity should make us quicken our pace. If you could often look through the heavenly telescope and see the Judgment Seat, the Great White Throne in the heavens, and the assembled multitude, and *yourself* rendering up your books of account to the last great Examiner, some of you would live far differently than you do! God help us to do so and, by the recollection of this, "but," though it comes over us like a cloud, tonight, let us be quickened into the immediate and joyous work of blessing and magnifying the Most High!

II. Let us now go to our second point which is this—A HAPPY RESOLUTION. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord."

"We will bless the Lord," for it seems to us to be the very thing for which we were created. This is the flower of our being! We are never happier, surely, never more developing what God has put into us by His Grace, than when we are praising and blessing Him.

We will bless the Lord by our songs. They shall be more frequent than they have been. Brothers and Sisters, do you sing as much as you might? Do you sing at work and do you sing in the household, and do you sing on your beds? I have known some who have managed to live always singing. It was my joy to know an old man, a very old man, who was famous in the village where he lived because, as he walked the streets, he was always humming a little bit of a hymn. He was a grand old Methodist of the grand old days—and he had always some glorious hymn that he would go along tooting as he went about the streets! And he sang himself to bed and sang himself to sleep, and, I was going to say, sang himself awake—he was scarcely awake before he began to sing again. It was all singing with him!

Now, you know how the worldlings sing. You cannot be quiet in your beds, at night, because of the noise they make in the streets. Let us be as ready with the songs of Zion as they are with the songs of Gomorrah! Let us magnify the Lord with our songs far oftener than we have done.

Then, let us magnify the Lord *in our daily talk and conversation* while we speak about Him. Never speak badly of His name. Some of you do. There is sometimes a grumbling at His Providences. There is a fretting at the trials He sends. There is a complaining about all sorts of things. But you who love Him, begin, from this night, to bless Him by speaking

well of His name. Bless Him for everything! Bless Him for the bitters; bless Him for the cold; bless Him for poverty and sickness. “That is a hard thing to do,” you say. Yes, but it is a sweet thing to do—it will be as comforting to yourself as it will be glorifying to God!

Begin to praise Him *in the tone of your spirit*. May God the blessed Comforter help you to do it by a calm, equable frame of mind, by a Divine placidity of temper, by a complete subjection of the will to Him so that you shall not feel it to be subjection, but find it to be your delight that the Lord should do with you whatever pleases Him! It is bliss to praise God so that our very *thoughts* praise Him, not by effort, but as flowers pour out their perfume, so that our inmost soul praises Him, just as the birds sing, not as if it were a task, but because it cannot help it! Was it not made to sing? And so it sits on the bare bough, before the spring has yet developed the green leaf and opening bud, and it sings even amid the frost and snow—and wakes us up in the spring morning with its hymn of praise to its Creator. “Its,” I said, but I mean a *thousand* of them—winged choristers praising and blessing God, not because they are told that they ought to do so—but because it is their intense delight to pour out their music! Oh, that we were little birds, made always to sing God’s praise! Oh, that we were drops of dew, forever sparkling in the light of God’s love!

I like to look at the lilies, sometimes, and think how they worship God. They never study a sermon, or compose a hymn, or weave a rhyme, or even *think*—but they serve God by standing still and showing themselves and breathing out their sweet perfume to the winds! Oh, to be full of God, till, at last, you bless Him even by existing! Till life becomes a Psalm and even breathing becomes a hymn of praise unto the Most High in whom we live, and move, and have our being! Blessed be His name! We will bless the Lord from this time forth, in some such way as that, as He shall help us!

For, dear Brothers and Sisters, we may well bless the Lord *because we are alive*. That, “*but*,” suggests that since others have gone, we should bless Him that we live. I do not know whether I would not as soon have been in Heaven as here, but, still, to abide in the flesh for a while may be more necessary for some and, therefore, I am glad to be alive. And some of you with your children about you, with many dependent upon you, should thank God that while you are needed here you are spared here—and you should thank Him who has kept you. You might have been killed in some accident. You might have been struck down, as many have been this year, by contagious disease. You might have been in such pain, tonight, that death would have seemed a relief to you. Bless the Lord that it is not so. Bless Him that you live. O God, our Creator and Preserver, we will, from this time forth, bless You that we are alive!

Then bless God *because of spiritual life*, for there is something in that calling for devout gratitude, for to live, and yet not to be alive *spiritually*, is to be a walking corpse, an animated dunghill, a Lazarus who by this time stinks, and yet is not in his grave! It is a horrible thing to be going about in this world with eyes that do not see God, and with ears that never hear His voice when He is speaking everywhere, and with a heart that never responds to His Divine love. Better not to be, than to be and yet not know the greatest and best of Beings. Let us bless God that He has quickened us into spiritual life, for it was not so with some of you a long while ago.

No, it is but a few *months* since some of you were made alive. And this new year may remind you of some former new years, and of how they were spent, and into what condition you brought yourselves! O Lord, our state of spiritual death does not bear thinking of, except we wet the page of memory with many tears! Blessed be Your name, You have delivered us from the bondage of corruption and brought us into newness of life! Therefore will we bless You from this time forth and forevermore!

And let us bless the Lord because, according to the Psalm, *we have been blessed of Him*. Read, again, the 12th verse, “The Lord has been mindful of us: He will bless us.” Now, it is not only according to the Psalm, but it is also a matter of fact. “The Lord has been mindful of us.” I do not know your histories, dear Friends, as you know them, but I would like you to pull out your pocketbooks and your diaries, and just look down them. How many times has the Lord been mindful of you during the past year? I could tell of many interpositions of His Divine love on *my* behalf, but I will not do so at this time. I will bless His name in secret for His loving kindness towards His unworthy servant.

A good old woman used to hear people speak about their Ebenezers, or stones of help, in remembrance of God’s mercy, but she said that when she looked back on hers, she thought she was looking back on a wall. They were set so closely together that they seemed to make a wall on the right hand and on the left of all her pathway. Well, that is just like mine. I am such a debtor to Divine Mercy that if I could but pay half a farthing in the pound, I should need to give fifty million times more than I am, or ever hope to be worth! Oh, what I owe Him!

Rutherford speaks somewhere of his soul going right down in the stream of God's love, not floating in it, but sinking, foundering, going down till mighty love went over the masthead of his soul. And such do I feel that our gratitude ought to be. The ocean of God's love rises above us so as altogether to swallow us up. The Lord has done such great things for us that if we do not bless Him, the very stones we walk on in the streets might cry out against us, and every beam in the wall might groan in the night to think that it sheltered such an ungrateful sleeper! Oh, the mercy, the forgiving mercy, the abounding mercy, the ceaseless mercy of the living God! What tongue can ever tell it? Surely the poet did not strain metaphors too much, or use hyperboles, or push them too far, when he said—

*“But, oh, eternity’s too short
To utter half Your praise!”*

Again, we ought to praise the Lord, according to the Psalm, *because He will bless us*. You must have noticed that the Psalmist expressed that idea several times in different forms—“He has been mindful of us: He will bless us.” This is a very sweet duty to which I would exhort you, to bless the Lord in the prospect of what He is *going to do*. Come, let us weave songs out of tomorrows! We will not boast of them, but we will bless God for them. Let us praise Him for all the love and kindness that is going to be with us through all the year that is just beginning! Troubles will come, but the Lord will deliver the godly out of them all! Tribulation will be our portion, but in Christ we shall have peace! Perhaps we shall go Home this year—if we are to do so, let it not cause us even so much as one single fear, but let us put that into the song and bless the Lord for gates of pearl and harps of gold—so soon to be the heritage of His unworthy children!

III. Now I must be brief on the other points, but I want to delay a minute or two on the third head, which is AN APPROPRIATE COMMENCEMENT—“From this time forth.”

When is the time to begin to praise God? *Now*, Brothers and Sisters, *now*—“From this time forth.” You see, it was just then that the heathen were saying, “Where is their God?” *When God is blasphemed by others*, then let His people praise Him! Whenever you hear anything said against God, any note of blasphemy or skepticism, then say, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth.” Always feel as if you were called upon to make some recompense to the blessed name for the dishonor which the adversary has done to it. I think there will be less swearing in the world if we always do that, for the devil will tell his children to leave off when he finds that every time they curse, we bless God all the more. Whenever you hear that a bad book has come out—whenever you hear that some scientific man has been saying something that will mislead the unwary, say, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth. We will have a new song because of that. We will make some kind of amends to God’s great name because of all the calumny that is cast upon it.”

So let us do it *whenever we have a sense of mercy*. He has been mindful of us, therefore, from this time forth, we will praise His name. Do you feel as if He had done great things for you, of which you are glad? Is your heart leaping, tonight because of some special mercy? Then let this be your sweet resolve, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth.”

I think that we ought to praise the Lord *from the first moment in which we know our sins are forgiven*, the first moment in which we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and then from every period of spiritual enjoyment. You who are about to be baptized may well say, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth, from the time when we come forward to confess our faith in Jesus, when we put on Christ by public profession of allegiance to Him.” From every season of coming to the Communion Table, from every hallowed night of wrestling prayer, from every time you climb the Mountain of Transfiguration and behold your Master’s Glory, yes, and from every Gethsemane’s night, when you strive almost in vain to watch with Him one hour—even then, say, “From this time forth we will bless Him.”

I am sure that I may claim that *the beginning of another year* is a good time to begin blessing the Lord. For the mercies of another year, the forgiveness of another year, the provision, the instruction, the guidance, the supplies of another year, for the mercies of the year on which we enter with good heart of hope, for all our fears which have been averted, for all our hopes which have been fulfilled, for all that we have learned, for all that we have experienced, let us carry out this happy resolution that, from this time forth, we will bless the Lord!

Oh, how I wish that I could put this resolution into the hearts of some people whom I know! I hope they are Christians, but, you know, they were born on a bleak day and they always speak with lips of frost. You are never many minutes with them but you hear grievous complaining. Dear Brother, how would it do for you to say, “From this time forth I will bless the Lord”? We know some who, like myself, are depressed by this horrible wintry weather. We get to feel all

our bones aching and we are very apt, when we are full of rheumatism, to begin to talk about it. Come, my Sister. Come, my Brother, let us have done with that theme, and say, “From this time forth we will bless the Lord!”

I know the style of talk that is very frequent—“Never was there such a dull time for trade. Business is worse than I ever knew it. Everything is going to the bad. There are wars and rumors of wars, and the world is coming to an end, and I do not know what is *not* going to happen.” Well, Brother, if you like that strain, you must keep on at it, but as for me, and you, too—I really think that it would be better if we were *both* to say—“From this time forth we will bless the Lord.” We have strummed away long enough on that sackbut—let us begin to play on the psaltery and the harp of a solemn sound! We have too long been singing—

*“Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supply!
No cheering fruits, no wholesome trees,
Nor streams of living joy.
But pricking thorns through all the ground,
And mortal poisons grow;
And all the rivers that are found
With dangerous waters flow.”*

Let us go on to the next verse and sing—

*“Yet the dear path to Your abode
Lies through this horrid land.
Lord, we would keep the heavenly road,
And run at Your command!”*

Let us begin to sing of the path, and the Guide, and the Home to which we are going! We are a day’s march nearer Home, a year’s march nearer Home, so from this time forth let us bless the Lord!

IV. And then comes, lastly, AN EVERLASTING CONTINUANCE—“We will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.”

I was born in a county where there were many old-fashioned people and I am old-fashioned, myself. Whenever I read my Bible and find that it says, “everlasting,” or, “forevermore,” I believe that it means what it says. Of course, I have lived in a world in which I am informed that it does not mean anything of the kind—that it means a very short period—or a period longer or shorter according as circumstances may happen! I am afraid I shall never learn this new lingo. I have no intention of trying to learn it, either, so I am sure that I never shall be able to understand things the wrong way upwards, as the wise men now do. “Everlasting” will be *everlasting* with me forever and ever, I can tell you, and it will find me, at any rate, a believer in eternity as being that which never has an end! I believe that those who think differently will have to come round to the opinion that I have found in the Word of God. At any rate, if we are to agree, they will have to do so, for I shall never come round to *their* view.

Now, then, the expression, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore,” means that *our praise shall have no end to it*, “Forevermore,” means eternity, I believe, and I pray God that we may make it to mean eternity in our praise “from this time forth and forevermore.” Falling from Grace shall not come in to make us cease praising and blessing the Lord! We began to praise Him, not in the strength of nature, but in the strength of Grace—and that strength will not exhaust itself, for it will be renewed day by day—so that we shall be able to bless the Lord forevermore.

Death itself shall not stop us from blessing God! No, it shall but increase the choir and sweeten the harmony! We shall love the Lord more and praise Him better when death shall have divested us of these tongues which now are impediments to the highest praise—and shall have given us the power to speak without lips and tongues in a nobler language before the Throne of God—

*“My God, I’ll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die,
And praise You when I rise again,
And to eternity.”*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if we are in the right state of heart, there *is not a time when we could leave of blessing the Lord*. When shall we cease to bless Him? When He leaves off blessing us? That will never be! When we leave off being in debt to Him? That can never be! When He ceases to be worthy of blessing? That cannot be! Or when the life

of Divine Grace within us ceases to recognize His blessedness? That, also, cannot be, for it shall be in us “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Leave off praising Him? O Brothers, Sisters, never, never, never, not even for the time in which a clock might tick once! Go on praising Him if He shall take you up to the bed of sickness—if every limb shall be a mass of pain, if every nerve shall be a highway for a crowd of pains to travel on—yet still go on blessing and praising and magnifying Him, for this is His due! When we have praised Him best and most, we have not given Him what He deserves! Let us fill this House of Prayer with our praise and thanksgiving tonight! The Romanist sets his incense on fire and fills the whole place with its smoke. Oh, let there go up to God from our grateful hearts a cloud of the smoke of praise unto His blessed name! Blessed be the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, from this time forth and forevermore!

If any man cannot join in that praise, let him remember that he is not fit to live, nor fit to die—for to die without praising God and to rise again—would be to remain in a state in which he could not possibly enter Heaven, since the one occupation of Heaven is magnifying and blessing and praising the Lord forever and forever! Let such an one seek the Lord, now! Let him trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! Then he shall be saved and he will be able to join us in saying, “We will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
PSALM 115.

Verses 1-3. *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Your name give Glory, for Your mercy, and for Your Truth's sake. Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: He has done whatever He has pleased.* It was very natural that the heathen should say, “Where is their God? because they had no outward emblem, no visible image, no tangible token—whereas the heathen had their many gods, such as they were, made of wood and stone, so that they asked, “Where is their God?” I think that when that question is suggested, it is a good sign, for it proves the purity of the faith which has cleansed itself from outward symbolism. May men often have to ask of us, “Where is their God?”

But I fear that the people of Israel were brought into so low a state, at times, that this question was also asked in scorn and derision, “Where is *now* their God?” “He was with them when they came out of Egypt. He was with them when they captured Canaan. He has been with them in many a terrible battle, turning to flight the armies of the aliens, but where is *now* their God?” It is a cutting question under such circumstances. It was so with the Psalmist when he said, “As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God?” “But our God is in the heavens where their gods never were. He has done whatever He has pleased.” The gods of the heathen have done *nothing*—they *cannot* do anything.

4-7. *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.* It is a grim piece of sarcasm which the Psalmist here aims at the idol gods. I do not know, sometimes, whether this is not all that superstition deserves of us—to be utterly laughed at and put to scorn. The spirit of Elijah is not altogether the most Christ-like, and yet even the Christian may well say to the priests of Baal, in derision and contempt, “Cry aloud, for he is a god.” What do they deserve who so degrade themselves as to worship things which their own hands have made—things which can be seen with the eyes and touched with the hand? Yet, even in this country we have thousands who call themselves Christians, who prostrate themselves before idols made in different forms and shapes—yes and say to a piece of bread that the baker made, “This is our god.” Well says the Psalmist—

8. *They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them.* They are as doltish and as stupid, as blind and as deaf, and as ridiculous as the gods that they make, for no man was ever better than the god he worshipped!

9-11. *O Israel, trust you in the LORD: He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield. You that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield.* There is real help in the living Jehovah, real protection in Him.

12. *The LORD has been mindful of us: He will bless us.* There is a New Year's motto for you. It will go back through the old year, and forward into the new one—"The Lord has been mindful of us: He will bless us." See how mindful He has been of us all through the past year in a thousand ways! Long before we have known our needs, He has supplied them. He has delivered us from dangers of which we never knew and led us into mercies of which we never dreamed!

12, 13. *He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.* Great blessings for small people, and not small blessings for those whom He makes great in Israel.

14, 15. *The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. You are blessed of the LORD which made Heaven and earth.* This is the Creator's blessing, therefore a real one. Many of you have had the new creation worked in you—you shall live to see new heavens and a new earth!

16. *The Heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth has He given to the children of men.* And they seem as if they meant to keep it, too. The sad thing is that they get the earth into their hearts and so they miss the blessing which the Lord intended them to receive from His *gift* of it.

17. *The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.* As far as this world is concerned, no note is heard from the grave.

18. *But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD.* So let us do tonight. Let us have an extra Psalm of praise to the Lord who has brought us safely through another year!

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