

Messenger and Visitor

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THE NEW YEAR.

In the book of Joshua are found these words addressed to the children of Israel. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore. They are very suggestive to all our readers, standing upon the threshold of a new year. The way which opens before us is one which we have never heretofore passed. It will be in almost every respect a new way. New duties will press on us. The year just closed brought with it obligations, which whether met or neglected, are now passed. We cannot recall them. If unperformed we cannot perform them now. The days are ended and the record is closed, but another year has opened, and over its every hour, an infinite authority extends. The duties may, and will be, new; such as never before were ours. These will confront us on the threshold of each returning day. The ancient people were assured of divine guidance. There may be no pillar of fire by day nor of cloud by night, but there will be the continual presence of the great 'I am'.

New temptations will assail us. The temptations of no two days are exactly the same. The wiles of the adversary are not mere repetitions of former attacks. With great cunning he will seek to adapt them to the circumstances of our daily lives. No one can predict from what quarter his virtue, or integrity or honor will be assailed. Lying in ambush, like beasts of prey, all along our path will be mighty temptations ready to leap upon us at any moment. We need to be ever on our guard, ever on the watch. The Master knew the need when he enjoined upon his followers, to "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." This is necessary for the way is new, and the temptations will be new, new in form, new in force, and new in fact. Your trials and afflictions will be new. You cannot foretell them. No mortal can; and this is well. Some of us would flinch and falter and grow pale if the trials and sorrows of this year were revealed to us. It is well that a merciful God has hidden them from our eyes, they will be new, of that we will be sure. Those of no preceding years have been like what these will be. Sickness, losses, bereavements, desertion by friends and many other sad experiences may be ours ere this year closes.

New mercies will be ours, our Father has boundless resources. They have not been exhausted. His storehouse is filled with them. He is a great giver, and wise and generous will. So, too, his gifts are varied. He is not shut up to an exact repetition of what He has done. He can shower upon us every morning mercies that are new and renew them at our feet. He can surprise us with tokens of his love, and we have eyes to see these, they will surprise us. A thousand agencies will be toiling, every hour for our good. Unseen ministries will be constantly contributing to our welfare. Comfort and strength will come to us from most unexpected sources, and we shall often find the truth of that scripture verified in our experiences, "As thy day is thy strength shall be."

There must have been a strength and solace to Israel to know that the Ark of the Covenant would go before them, a constant and unerring guide. No visible Ark of the Covenant or any other outward sign of a divine presence will go before us. And yet an unseen and glorious presence may be ours at every step. The humblest believer in Jesus—the man who trusts in Him and strives to do his will, may know that He will never leave nor forsake him through all life's journey. Let then the path be untrodden and unknown, if with such companionship and leadership, we go forward, we need not fear, our Leader can never be surprised. Let us put out our hand, even though the darkness may be deep and dense, for there is an outstretched hand that will clasp ours, and lead us through and on, and up, to the shining heights. Say to your Father, as did one of old, "If thy presence go not with me, send me not up thence." With such a prayer in your hearts, you may be sure of a glad and happy New Year. It is such a year that the Messenger and Visitor wishes for the thousands who read its pages from week to week. We hope that to all the friends who have helped to make this paper a welcome visitor to their homes, the year upon which we have just entered may be in the truest and best sense, the brightest and happiest which they have ever known.

The same good wishes are extended to the editor, and

the hope is cherished for a speedy return to the editorial chair which he has so ably filled for many years. To one and all who read these lines we wish
A Happy New Year.

DO YOUR BEST.

This is a good motto for all, at this season of the year "whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well." It is the only right road to success. By its uses life's prizes are won.

A young painter was directed by his master to complete a picture on which the master had been obliged to suspend his labors on account of his growing infirmities. "I commission thee, my son," said the aged artist, "to do thy best upon this work, do thy best."

The young man had such reverence for his master's skill, that he felt incompetent to touch canvas which bore the work of that renowned hand, but "Do thy best" was the old man's calm reply; and again to repeated solicitations he answered "Do thy best." The youth with a trembling hand seized the brush, and kneeling before his appointed work, he prayed; it is for the sake of my beloved master that I implore skill and power to do this deed." His hand grew steady as he painted, slumbering genius awoke in his eye, enthusiasm took the place of fear, forgetfulness of himself supplanted his self-distrust, and with a calm joy he finished his labor. The "beloved master" was borne on his couch into the studio, to pass judgment on the result. As his eye fell upon the triumph of art before him, he burst into tears, and throwing his enfeebled arms around the young artist he exclaimed, "My son, I paint no more!" That youth, Leonardo De Vinci became the painter of "The Last Supper," the ruins of which, after the lapse of three hundred years, still attract annually to the refectory of an obscure convent in Milan hundreds of the worshippers of art. "Do your best" would be a most excellent motto for every school room, in every workshop and over every pastor's study table in the land—it is the only method by which perfection is attained. The master's "well done!" will be ample reward.—Will not some of our youthful readers put this motto in practice at least for the year upon which we have just entered?

A SAFE INVESTMENT.

In these days when so many are casting about for profitable investments for their surplus gains, it is not amiss to inquire where the safe investments are. As far as money is concerned, the Lord's treasury is one of the safe places; perhaps, the safest. Peabody who, some years ago made an investment of some millions, in an endeavor to comfortably house some of London's poor, did a noble deed. Houses and lands and stocks and bonds are liable to depreciate. They also do not help the world's greatest need. While they minister to the comfort and enjoyment of their possessors they as often minister to their perplexity. The man who lays aside his thousands to found a school of learning—to build a hospital for the sick and afflicted, to care for the aged and infirm, to send the gospel to those who know it not, is making an investment which will never depreciate and the dividends may even reach the next world in the gratitude of those who have been helped or won to Christ, in this world.

If you open your Bible, you will see a very short notice of a good investment. It was announced by our Lord Jesus Christ, in these words, "The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found and hid; and in his joy, he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field." There is the announcement of a treasure, of great value, that comes within the reach of everybody, rich or poor, high or humble, provided he is willing to pay the price. That "find" in the field signifies a gospel hope, or Jesus Christ as a heart-possession. The man in the parable set such a value upon the treasure which he had found on his neighbor's farm that he parted with all he had and bought the ground. It proved to be a good investment.

Some persons who read this parable are perplexed with the idea, that the Christian's hope or the salvation of the soul, should be represented by Christ as a matter of purchase. Is not the gospel the story of free grace? Is not eternal life the gift of God? Is not the great supper open to all who may desire to come? Most certainly, God has provided a salvation for us at an infinite cost by giving His Son, and the Son of God has paid the price of redemption by giving himself to death as our sacrifice and substitute. But there is no such thing in the Bible as unconditional salvation. The matchless treasure of a Christian's heaven is God's magnificent gift, but not a single soul can possess that treasure without paying the full price. Repentance of sin is a part of that price, for except we repent, we shall perish. A renewed heart is a prime condition, for unless a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Faith is another essential item in the price, he that believeth on the Lord Jesus shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall not see life. Christ offered salvation to everybody, but he never cheapened it, "Unless a man take up his cross and come after me, he cannot be my disciple." Sometimes a right eye must go out, or a right arm must go off. Peter and

John bought their discipleship by giving up their nets and their trade; Matthew bought his by surrendering the profits of his collectorship, Paul by giving up his proud Phariseism. The foolish young ruler was unwilling to pay the price, and went away sorrowful. Not a single human being ever has got or ever will get the treasure of salvation for nothing. If you want a safe investment which will pay the largest dividends, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." You will get more out of this than out of any other investment you ever made in "the life that now is."

EXAMPLE AND PRECEPT.

It is often asserted, that the success or failure of a church to contribute to the work of the denomination depends upon the pastor of that church. There is some truth in this statement; but it is not all the truth. There is no doubt that it is the duty of the pastor to keep his people posted in regard to the different departments of work in which the churches may be engaged. Opportunities should be seized for informing the members of what is being done in extending the Redeemers Kingdom in the world. It is a part of his work to teach his people from the Word of God the duty and privilege of contributing for the advancement of that Kingdom. Whenever this is faithfully and persistently and lovingly done the response of the people will be more or less generous to the missionary and benevolent work of the denomination. But when all this is done he may find sometimes that his best endeavors are defeated, by some 'leading member' or members who set themselves to thwart his best laid plans.

Sometimes a church debt, sometimes and ugly deficit in current expenses, sometimes much needed church repairs or the unpaid pastor's salary, are given as a reason why the missionary work of the body should be left for others to perform. Still his duty is clear. There is no excuse for him it is 'line upon line, and precept upon precept.' This is a part of his work to which he has been called and he can no more evade or neglect it and be true to his calling, than he can neglect to pray and read his Bible and be a true servant of Jesus Christ. There is however, one thing that must never be forgotten. He must practice what he preaches. The pastor must not only preach benevolence, he must practice it. In this matter, he must lead his people. He must not always say 'go thou,' it will be better and more helpful to say 'Come ye.' When a pastor can say after an earnest presentation of some phase of our denominational work, "Now brothers let us all 'lend a hand.' I want to give \$ to the work. Who will help me and how much?" The result is usually most cheering. We are glad to know that the pastors of our churches are as a rule benevolent and do contribute from their small salaries very generously.

Example and precept should always go hand in hand and if best results are to be secured.

Editorial Notes.

—Somebody has said "Whosoever" is written on the outside of mercy and "Whatsoever" on the inside. This is a striking way of putting a great truth. The "Whosoever" takes in all classes, ages, and every individual of our race. The "Whatsoever" covers the whole range of each individual's need for time and eternity. Let each see that he gets inside mercy's golden gate and when admitted to the great banqueting house of his love, grasp firmly the promise "Whatever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it."

—The Pacific Baptists says: "All other religions than Christianity base acceptance on merit. Christianity makes men worthy because they have already received from God the gift of worthiness. Over against man's unspeakable guilt, let us place God's unspeakable gift. Salvation is a gift, not a wage, a wage is something earned, a gift is something received. They that receive the abundance of grace and of the gifts of righteousness shall reign in life. All true enough. 'By grace are ye saved through faith.' It is a grace-on God's part and faith on man's part. The one is complement of the other.

—Rev. Dr. W. M. Lawrence who was pastor of the 2nd Baptist church of Chicago for twenty-four years, has been very successful in his work. He is reported to have baptize 2110, received by letter into church fellowship 1273, by experience 271 a total of 3554. Apart from church building or other considerable home improvements, there were raised and expended about \$680,000, more than half of which was devoted to Baptist energies other than the church work as limited to its own particular field—this is a fine record for any pastor. We always lose by confining our gifts to our own particular needs. We scatter that we may gather. Some of our churchers and pastors too make a great mistake along these lines. It is never and ought never to be 'all for self.'

—It is said that some poor women directed John Bunyan to their pastor John Gifford who had charge of a small Baptist church in Bedford. The little church so grew and prospered that ten of its members were from time to time ordained to the work of the gospel ministry. John Bunyan was the first of the ten. Those poor women through their