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84th Gospel Song

After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." Matthew 25: 19.

A most striking representation of human life was given by the Patriarch when he spoke of it as a Pilgrimage. We are travellers. Our starting point is the Cradle, our goal the grave. As we advance we encounter some points of deeper interest than others. Day by day, as we go on in the previous portion of the way, we come to regard surrounding scenes and objects with a kind of indifference. But suddenly we reach one of these prominent points, and our attention is at once ~~arrested~~^{attracted} by them, and we pause to consider them more closely. As the traveller in Alpine regions toiling over cliffs which rise before him, often attains some towering sum-

mit from which he can command a view of the tract of country behind him as well as of that which lies yet untrodden before him, so in the pilgrimage of Life, there are periods of remarkable interest which are ever recurring as we journey towards the grave, at which when we arrive we find ourselves arrested by the interest with which they are invested. Memory is sent back to review the past, and the mind by a natural impulse involuntarily looks onward to the future. The close of one year and the opening of another constitute together one of those eras of deep & solemn interest. Here we may take our position as upon an eminence and with mingled emotions of joy and sorrow, of gratitude and of regret, of encouragement, and

mortification we may review the past. On the
 other hand, with an imagination chastened
 by this review we may anticipate the future
 and enter upon the new year with more
 hopeful & trustful spirits. I invite you to spend
 with me this morning a brief space in looking
 back upon the closing ^{that has closed} year, so that together
 we may trace with grateful hearts, God's gracious
 dealings with us; and together we may take
 note of our unfaithfulness, and be stimulated
 to greater diligence in the future. One of
 the most prominent thoughts in this verse is
 that the Lord of those servants delayed the
 period of settlement with them "a long time".
 This is a representation of God's patience, in-
 asmuch as He allows us time to improve all

the talents, opportunities and privileges He has bestowed upon us. It will be well for us to decide, upon this proposed review, whether we are fully prepared for the reckoning to which God calls us today.

I propose a very simple plan and it will embrace the subjects following, viz:

- I. What God has enabled us to do, during the past year, ~~and~~ as a Church and as a people;
- II. What privileges and exemptions we have enjoyed;
- III. What improvement and spiritual advancement we have made.

1. What have we done by God's help during the year? I remark first as regards our financial operations, that the Church and congregation

have been enabled by the good Spirit and Providence of God, to contribute to every one of the prominent departments of Christian Benevolence organized under the care of the Gen. Ass, as follows:

To the cause of Foreign Missions,	—————	\$50.00
" Sustentation,	—————	43.90
" Publication,	—————	24.15
" Education,	—————	138.90
Relief of disabled ministers, & the widows & orphans of deceased ministers,	—————	39.00
For the evangelistic fund	—————	40.40

Total, \$336.35
 366.97
 1380

Total average per member — \$4.20

For Miss " " 62^{cts}, Sustentation, 55. ^{cts} 2083.32

Publication, 30^{cts} — Education, 1.73. Dis. min. 48^{cts} Ev. — 50^{cts}.

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Now I wish you to notice the fact that these averages are far above those of our Chhs. in general. We have reported 112000 members in round numbers, in the So. Ch. You will see that if all had contributed to these causes in the same proportion the sum for Foreign Missions would have been \$69,440. instead of \$45,054. For Sustentation, \$60,500 instead of \$39,391. Ed. 193,760. instead of about 18,000. Pub. 33,600 - 8,666. Ev. 56,000 inst. of 15,500. Invalid 53,460 inst. of 9,641 and the grand total of the whole amt. of benevolent contributions of the So. Ch., (to these 6 causes - we have been \$470,400 instead of \$150,974. In other words if the whole of the Chhs had averaged for the 6 causes the same amt as given by the Sandersdale St. Ch., we should have raised in the So. Ch. more than three as much as was raised.

It is to be observed that this estimate does not include four other subjects that are embraced in the tabulated summaries of our

Gen Assembly's ^{minutes;} ~~viz~~: Presbyterial (Com. fund) Pastoral ^{wh. in this Ch.} Congregational (building & repairs) Miscellaneous; ~~amts~~ altogether to the sum of = 1380

In addition to which we have raised funds for the poor \$46.81 for contingent expenses \$320.16 = \$366.97.

Our Sab. School Children have raised \$106.45.

All of these various amts. combined and aggregated give as the result of the financial operations of the year the sum of ^{\$2083.33} \$809.77

Besides, as another part of the material or more secular operations of the Ch. we record with gratitude to God, and under God to many friends into whose hearts it pleased Him to put the kindness, for their liberal pecuniary

aid whereby we have been enabled to purchase the most ^{eligible} ~~beautiful~~ lot in the city, and to erect

upon it a beautiful & commodious House at a cost of \$10868.12 which has been paid up of Worship, II As to our privileges & exemptions,

During the ^{year} ~~year~~ the stated dispensation of the regular ordinances of God's House and worship have been kept up during all the sabbaths, ^(+ wednesday evenings) except four or five during my necessary absences, and 108 discourses & Sermons

have been delivered by your own ministers, 2 by Rev Dr Marshall

sides 22 by Dr Chall, 2 by Rev Mr Young, 1 by 1 Dr Stainback

Dr Witherpoon and 1 by Dr Palmer & 1 by Rev Mr. of Miss. + Swans of this city - Dr Ablyt & Jones of the Mech Daniel. The Sacrament of the Lord's supper - 4 times.

There have been added to the Church's membership during the year twenty-one, of which eleven joined by certificate, and ten by profession of faith.

Our present membership numbers 80 after taking into the account dismissions deaths and absences.

The exercises of the Sabbath School have been ~~done~~ with great efficiency on the part of Super: & teachers kept up without interruption, and the

number of scholars on the roll has

been as high as 117 while the average

1st Q^r 101 2^d Q^r 71 for the yr 86.
attendance has been ~~about 76~~ ~~thru the year~~
weekly

The Ladies' Prayer meeting and Society, has held its regular meetings and I have always regarded it as a most important and valuable auxiliary to the spiritual advancement of the Church, and I doubt not that God has made it the channel of great blessings to many, the full value of which will be revealed only when Eternity shall bring its light to shine upon all things earthly. It ought to be stated for their encouragement that by their energy & zeal

they have contributed to the ornamentation
and furniture of the House of Worship
the handsome ^{sum} of about \$500.

For all these works of love and faith done
by the Church in all its Departments of
labor, let us not forget that we are
indebted to the kind Providence of God
and His Holy Spirit. Through these
Divine sources of aid we have been
enabled & inclined to do them. Our
Heavenly Father has not only furnished
us the means, but He has put it into
our hearts to do these things.

To our beloved and distinguished brethren,
Rev Drs Palmer and Witherspoon we all
owe a debt of gratitude for the precious

sermons delivered by them in our house of worship, as well as for their able and valuable Lectures in behalf of the Ladies' Association, rendering to them important and timely aid in their work for the House. May the Lord who endowed these beloved brethren and all the others, who have filled our pulpit during the year so richly with their eminent gifts and graces, reward them for their labors of love among us!

Above all let us recognize the special goodness of God in enabling us to complete the House of Worship, and dedicate it to the service of the Triune Jehovah, free from debt. Leaving us thus with no embarrassment or obstacle in our career as a Church, but having before us a clear ^{field} ~~pathway~~ of labor for God's

Glory and the salvation of souls.

With all these privileges, we should bear in mind the exemptions from calamity, and evil with which we have been blessed during the year. It has been a year of almost unparalleled health in our congregation.

1873 — 1876 — Savannah & Memphis
 There we have followed to the grave a beloved sister, Mrs. Susan Allen, and mingled our sympathies with the ^{sorrows of her} bereaved husband & family, and lament the loss of one so fitted by her piety to fill a valued place in God's Ch.

But it must not be forgotten that our loss was her gain, and while Earth has lost, Heaven has gained, in attractions. Her dying hours were marked by a faith in Jesus X^t. that enabled her to triumph over all doubt and fear, ~~and~~ ^{and so}

her testimony to the truth of the religion of her Savior was eminently honoring and full of comfort.

Death is always sad to surviving friends, and at ~~so~~ time so near to the event, it cannot fail to re-open the wound inflicted upon sorrowing hearts, to recur to another death, and this in the case of ^{a member} ~~one~~ of our Sabbath School. I need hardly tell you that I allude to dear Sallie Semaster. You know how bright & lovely she was; how full of life and joy she seemed just before her illness occurred, when she was with her Class on her last Sabbath; how suddenly she was prostrated by disease; how rapidly she was borne to the grave; in spite of all that the skill of the Physician could do, or

the tenderest attentions of most devoted friends. But blessed be God! We do not sorrow as those who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. The deaths of such Characters has been compared to the disappearance of the morning star.

"They set as sets the morning star, which goes not down behind the darkened west nor hides obscured amid the tempests of the sky, but melts away into the light of Heaven."

~~Only~~ ^{last summer} one more death ~~has~~ occurred ~~for~~ among our congregation - another member of our sabbath school - little Sidney Pleasants. He was with us not long; but from his death let all

This was little Eva Sects 15 who with little warning was taken away from our little sabbath circle of learners to the Sanctuary above.

The little Chr. learn that none of them are too young to die; and let these ~~three~~ instances serve to warn us all ~~that~~ to be always prepared to meet our God in death, judgment

and Eternity. But just as we were closing up the year's accounts, the messenger of Jesus came again and carries home one of our little lambs from this earthly flock to His heavenly fold.

III. And now we have one more exercise to go through in this review, and that is to consider what improvement, and advancement in the Divine Life we have made. "It is greatly wise to talk with our past hours, and ask them what report they bore to Heaven." They have made some report, all is on record ~~against~~ ^{about} us, in the book of Remembrance & these reports will appear at the great Day of reckoning. Yet we need not wait for that solemn season. Let us see

now how the account stands. If against us we may find time to reform. If by God's grace we have done something for His cause, and have grown in grace & in good works, then we may rejoice in the grace and goodness of God.

1. Do we take to ourselves the credit of all the good we have done this year? I admit that as instruments we have done something. But if we "sacrifice to our own net and burn incense to our own drag"; if we find ourselves claiming the merit of what has been accomplished then we are guilty of robbing God of His own glory and idolizing self. Nothing can be more offensive to God than this. Let us be cautious about self worship. If we have done well, give

God the glory; and wherein we have failed to do even as well as we might have done, (and who can or dare say that we might not have done more & better) let us take all the shame and humiliation of our failures to ourselves. So we shall grow in humility.

2. Have we been more peaceful & harmonious among ourselves, cultivating brotherly love, and being always on our guard against saying or doing or even thinking evil about our neighbors, to a greater degree than formerly? If we closely observe society around us, I think we shall find that there is always a propensity in men & women to think uncharitably, and then ^{as} out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, - there is a like propensity to utter uncharitable thoughts, and then positive & palpable form is given to these thoughts

and words, in acts of unkindness, or involuntary slights in manner. There is also in some a sensitiveness of nature, that sometimes gives a mis-construction to words & deeds not intended by the speaker or actor, and then such interpreters proceeding upon their own conceptions of what is intended, and estimating over highly what is due themselves, become offended and a breach of peace is made, and oftentimes the peace of Zion is marred. I have no charge of this kind to make against any one. But as we have hitherto lived and labored together in fraternal harmony let us be careful to be more & more imbued with that Charity ^{"suffereth long;"} which thinketh no evil; ^{"bears all"} ~~suffereth~~ all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." So shall we assure ourselves of a Conscience

void of offence toward God & men;" and we shall properly value that "peace on earth, and good will to men," which is the substance of the Angel song of heralding Christ's advent into our world. So we shall grow in Charity & brotherly Love.

3. Have we been advancing in Holiness, and in purity of motive? This is a comprehensive question, and one we may find it difficult to answer in each case. Sometimes a modest & humble child^{ren} of God, more disposed to judge in ~~his~~^{their} ~~or her~~ own cases, severely, & looking at the occasional uprisings of inner sinful suggestions, and words not exactly what they should be, and acts performed under impulse, is ready to decide, ^{to write bitter things} against themselves and ^{almost} to feel that they have no right to consider themselves Christians at all. On the other hand, there are those

who never have a doubt about themselves, but whose fruits of daily walk and deportment, give ground for doubt in the minds of others. And so we may go on & point out other Classes varied as human temperament itself.

But no one of these Classes can be judged by any human standard. You may decide against one class, when indeed

this class may have God's grace. You may eulogise another that has little or no grace. God's word is

the only infallible rule, and the fidelity of the magnet even amid occasional disturbances & vacillations to the Pole, finely illustrates the condition of many a heart

the main tendency of whose affections points faithfully to God though subject to many interruptions from sur-

rounding influences. ^{as} We cannot decide whether there

is any daily and progressive growth and enlargement in the young sapling in our yard which we see

every day, so we cannot perceive our own growth & enlarge^{ment}

in the divine life day by day, because it is gradual, so
 described in S. S. But ^{as} after long absence from
 the spot returning, we are surprised to find that
 the slender scion, has grown tatter, and larger, &
 its foliage has become more widely spread, showing
 that there has been steady, and progressive growth,
real growth; so we may compare our present ^{spiritual} state on
 this ~~last~~ day of the last month of the year with
 that state we held on the first day ^(of the first month) of the year, and if
 there has been growth and enlargement in holiness
 and purity of motive it cannot escape our notice.
 I doubt not, my brethren, that this will be the experience
 of many of our beloved friends before me today,
 and that you ^(by God's grace & Spirit's help) have increased your intrusted talents from
 5 to 10; or from 2 to 4. God forbid that there sh^d. be among
 us any unprofitable servant, who during the past year has buried his

Lord's money beneath a mass of worldliness, vanity, and neglect!

In Conclusion, I remind you all, my brethren, & friends, that God our Sovereign Lord is present this day, & that after the lapse of another year "He cometh and reckoneth with us. In His great name then and as His servant I demand of you all, both children of God, and impenitent sinners, "How much owest thou my Lord?"

How much for health, and life, and food & raiment, and prosperous circumstances in life; a place to work and reward for your labor? How much for spiritual privileges; an open Bible; ~~and Sanctuary;~~ the blessed sabbaths you have enjoyed; the successful enterprises of the Ch.; the erection of a new & beautiful Sanctuary on premises of your own, free from all encumbrance;

the growing sabbath school; the happy prayer meetings
 and the privileges of Sanctuary worship, and closet
 communion with the Father and His Son Jesus
 Christ? What is the amt. of your indebtedness to
 your gracious Lord and Master? Have you the
 arithmetical account all made out, and are you ready
 to pay? The blessings bestowed on us are infinite in value,
 and priceless in their very nature, and so I see not
 how we can meet God's claims in kind. But God
 is very merciful, and I am authorised this morning
 to say that all He demands in return for all He
 has done is your heart. "My Son" &c. Let us, therefore, this
 morning enter into new Covenant engagements with
 the Lord; realizing that the "living sacrifice of our bodies
 to Him is but our reasonable service," & that "Love so
 amazing, so divine, demands our souls, our lives, our All!"

But my careless impenitent friend, I demand of you "How much
~~ought~~ thou, my Lord? You have done nothing for God either
 instrumentally or otherwise. You have forgotten God. You
 have slighted Jesus. You have done despite unto the Spirit
 of all Grace. You have been invited, and intreated, and
 urged time after time to come to Jesus. You have been raised
 up from a bed of sickness, & granted time & space for repentance.

You have not been called to lie down in a dark hopeless
^{no Astabula Disaster}
 grave. This morning you are here in life & health. Are
 you ready to settle? This is a good time for a settlement.

This is but a type of another day of settlement—Great Day!

Come & meet God, & accept His terms. Accept X^t's righteousness, & be saved

Then when the Last Day of Accounts shall come, altho' all your
 sins will be found in God's Book of record, yet they will be ^{balanced} blotted
 on the credit side by the Attonement of J. C., & you will be forever free from
 the Law & entitled to Everlasting Life. But if not, the long black list will stand
 unliquorated with an awful balance against you, & it will stand thro' Eternity.