

Looking Forward in Christ

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For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first, I am the last, and beside me there is no God.

Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him. And I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. And I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight, and I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut and sunder the bars of iron. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places. Thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name.

I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. There is no God beside Me. I girded thee, though thou hast not known me, that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the Lord, have created it. Part of Isaiah 44 and 45. Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank Thee by the wonder of the Spirit in working. Thou dost take these words drawn from an old, old book, written to a people that we are separated from by origin and by every human thing. And yet by Thy Spirit they are applied to us as though they were written for us and sent down just this morning.

We bless thee for these encouraging, hope-filled words. We thank Thee not only that Thou hast made them applicable to Israel and fulfilled them in Israel and will yet fulfill them, but we thank Thee for the thousands and multiplied thousands who have slept off, resting their heads upon such comforting words, who have gone into battle, who have gone to far parts of the earth, who have faced impossible situations trusting in these words. And Thou dost never, never let them down, but Thou dost bless them and keep them.

O Father, we pray Thee, Jesus Christ our Lord, that Thou wilt help us now, since our fathers trusted Thee and were not forsaken. Grant that we may trust Thee, and we know we shall not be forsaken either.

And we pray Thee, O God, Thou wilt be with our people scattered round over the earth, be with the nations which we are apart, down on our human side as our President, and we pray Thee for the Congress soon to convene again.

We pray thee, O Lord God, for those who labor in these high places, simply men, poor men, men with breath in their nostrils, and, O we ask Thee, Father, thou wilt make them able for their jobs. And we pray Thee for Thy work round the world in the cause of missions, wherever there are men and women preaching the gospel.

We pray Thou wilt bless every radio program, Thou wilt bless every effort of men and women to get a language, to learn it, to preach in it, and to win people and teach them and instruct them in the way they should go and baptize them and make them into little groups that form churches.

Help Thou, we pray Thee, our God, this day. Give us a cheerful outlook on life, and let us expect that we shall see a performance of all things promised us. Bless the sick and the bereaved and the troubled and the distressed. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

In the book of Hebrews, the twelfth chapter, beginning with verse 22, But ye are come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

And then a passage in Acts 14, verses 21 and 22. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, that is, Derbe, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.

Now, this being the last Sunday of a very eventful year, and being a kind of springboard over into a new year that will, for our church, be a momentous year, and for the whole world, I want to summarize, and sort of add up, some of the things that I find in the Book, and tell you what it's all about, and why we've got to go on.

In the book of Hebrews, I read to you that we are come unto. And the real work of any minister of the gospel is to present Christ in such a way that people gather unto Him. He says that wherever there are those gathered unto Him, in His name there am I in the midst of them.

Now, when we meet His conditions, and they're not hard, really, they're not hard. When we meet His conditions, we are a church. I wish that I had, in the very earliest time of my Christian life, been taught of the wonder of the Church. I had to learn it by myself. Not even in the Christian and Missionary Alliance is the emphasis placed, where it belongs, on the assembly of the saints, the gathering of the people unto Christ. We believe it, of course, everywhere, but the emphasis doesn't fall there as much as I feel that it should. But when we meet His conditions, we have His unseen presence.

Now, this I want to say again, this is a summary, and I'll probably say many things I've said before, but I want to repeat that we gather unto Him, and when we gather unto Him, we have that unseen Presence. Now, this to me is more important than anything that possibly could be offered to me, that we are met where Jesus sheds the oil of gladness on our heads.

And the conditions are unto me, not unto a favorite preacher. It is too bad that churches follow preachers. This I say is too bad, but it's true in a measure, I suppose everywhere. But we do not please our Lord when we gather to a man, no matter how good a man he may be. We do not please our Lord when we gather unto a name, no matter how great the name may be, except it be that Name which is above every name. And He says that we are to gather in My name, and that means not in the name of any denomination.

We are met here this morning not in the name of a denomination. Or if any have come in the name of a denomination, then I would kindly ask you to rethink this and see whether you are serving God rightly. For we are not met in the name of a denomination, neither are we met in the name of a cause.

That is why I sometimes look rather with a dull interest upon those gatherings, those bristling, scintillating gatherings that are met unto a cause, met to promote a cause. No, an assembly of Christians never meets to a cause. They meet in the name of a Person, and they gather in Christ's name, not in the name of a cause.

Now, there are many causes, many excellent causes, the cause of foreign missions, the cause of world evangelism, the cause of jail work, or many, many causes that are being promoted by the people of God, and properly so. But if we meet in the name of our cause, it won't be very long until the cause becomes the center of attraction and Christ fades into the background. And that is always bad. Christ must be first and let him tell us about the cause.

We are met to worship. We are met to worship, to worship the Triune God. And then as we worship the Triune God, He'll whisper the cause to us. He'll whisper to us what He wants us to do.

And then we're not met in the name of any peculiar doctrine. We are Protestants, of course, and we stand for all the truth, the doctrines of the truth, but we're not met in the name of a doctrine. We are gathered unto Him today. And we are gathered sort of as the lame were gathered there at the troubled pool in the fifth chapter of John. You remember why they came there to that pool? Because an angel went down once a year and troubled the waters, and whoever was in first, he got healed, according to the story we have here.

And, oh, I suppose that maybe there were times during the year when there weren't so many there. But when it came around about the time of the troubling of the waters, or when they hoped the waters would be troubled, then they gathered and lined up as they do in front of a ballpark or somewhere else, and waited long in turn. And Jesus Christ, our Lord, came, and he became to them the Healing Pool. He has been to many

thousands the Healing Pool. Do you know, my friends, that if your heart is all right, you can stand almost anything else.

If your heart is all right and you're restful inside and you're relaxed inside your spirit, in your heart, and everything is all right between you and God, you can stand just about anything. There's almost nothing that will get you down if you're restful inside your spirit, if your heart is warm.

Any of you who may be having troubles of any sort, financial troubles or home troubles or any kind of troubles, I recommend that you take a few hours off. You can do it. You say, but I haven't the time. Certainly, you have the time. You could fall down and break a hip, and then you'd have time. Take days, weeks off. You could get hit with a car and you'd have time. You could have a heart attack, and you'd take time. You can have time, all right. Take some time off and go before God and do this.

I recommend you do this. Do it before the new year comes in. I recommend that you go and write down your faults and flaws and sins on a piece of paper and lay them before the Lord. And then turn to the Scriptures that tell you that if you confess your sin, you'll be forgiven, and God will cleanse from all unrighteousness. And get your soul shriven. Get it bathed completely. Get it washed. Get it forgiven. Get it so that you're not troubled.

If your conscience isn't bothering you, but God seems close and everything's all right, it'll be a healing pool to you, my friend. And even if you are troubled about the matter of physical healing and you do have difficulties, physical difficulties, you'll find you can bear up under a physical difficulty with great equanimity if you have a restful heart. But the troubled heart, who can bear?

And then we're gathered today unto Jesus Christ as the Jews gathered to Joseph. You'll remember when Joseph went down into Egypt that he was the sort of the key to the whole thing. And when he went down there, things started going bad for the folks back home. Then came troubles and then the hour when there was a famine in the land and they went down to Egypt and there they found Joseph and they had to keep going back to Joseph. And finally, they went back and gathered around him and he stood for them before the great land of Egypt and before Pharaoh and he got them a place and got them established and got public favor on them. It was either Joseph or starvation.

So, we gather to Jesus Christ. Not one of two possibilities, nor one of three possibilities, or one of ten, but one of one. It is either Jesus Christ or starvation. And so we gather today to Jesus. And I wish we could keep that in mind. And I wish that sense would suddenly come over us that we are gathered unto him, unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, unto the innumerable company. Not we are going to be gathered, but we are gathered unto, it says. In the present tense, we are now gathered unto. We're gathered unto that which, though invisible, is completely real and trustworthy.

And then we're gathered unto Jesus as disciples gathered to a school, as students to a college. We're learners from Jesus. I often think of that famous saying of the great educator Mark Hopkins. They said, if you put a boy on one end of a log and Mark Hopkins on another, you had a college. Just let Mark Hopkins sit there and talk to a boy

on a log and you had a college. And so we learn about the things we are to be taught by our Lord.

Well, Jesus Christ, of course, is the whole faculty. He's the whole teaching staff. By the Holy Ghost he reveals truth to us. And we're thus disciples gathered unto Jesus, nobody knowing it all and nobody being the final word.

Occasionally somebody will write me. I have a letter now that I have to answer, saying, I'd like to know about thus and thus. Whatever you say, we'll accept. Whatever you say, we'll believe. Now I don't want any reputation like that. I don't think it's very widespread, but a few people foolishly believe that if I say it, that's it. I don't like that at all, because I could be wrong.

I remember once hearing Dr. L. H. Zimmer, that great German preacher who established that great church that's still going on, the largest church in the Alliance with a missionary offering of nearly \$100,000 a year. Why, I heard him stand up in the New York board meeting with President Schuman there and the vice president, I think I was vice president at the time, and the others gathered around there, the leaders in the Alliance, and some question came up, and they said, well, Dr. Simpson believed this way, and somebody read a passage from Dr. Simpson, and that great preacher got up, put his hands on the table in front of him and said, brethren, Dr. Simpson could be wrong.

And I've enjoyed that. I've enjoyed remembering it, that here was a man, though a loyal to his society and a loyal to his fellowship, yet he was not going to take the word of a man. Any word I give you might easily be temperament.

My opinions could rise out of temperament, out of a background you know nothing about, out of just sheer ignorance.

I remember when Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great lexicographer, made the first English dictionary. He defined the word hock, and he said the horse's elbow. And gathering afterward, a literary gathering, some woman who wasn't too delicate said to him, Dr. Johnson, why did you define hock as a horse's elbow? And she expected, of course, a very learned defense of his position. He stopped eating long enough to look her full in the face and said, ignorance, madam, sheer ignorance, and went on eating. Even though he was perhaps the most learned man in England, or one of the most learned men that England ever knew, he still was willing to admit, I did that because I was just plain ignorant. And it's entirely possible for a man with all the best intentions in the world to say things that are not so.

But Jesus Christ is the teacher, and we come unto Him and the anointing which you receive of Him abided in you, and you need not depend upon your teacher altogether. You can use him, and he'll help you, but don't lean on him. For that same Anointing teaches you all things, says John.

So, we gather unto Jesus because we're so tragically ignorant and so filled with truth that isn't the truth at all, but something else that we need to get rid of.

And then we're a spirit-drawn company also. You know, I was meditating over this and thinking of what draws people.

I have a friend, I don't know why I could call him a friend, he's a very jolly fellow and very friendly to me and to Mr. McAfee when we go down for tickets. He is always friendly, and he's a barn dance fan. And he's a nice, kind, middle-aged man, but he just loves barn dances, square dances, and that's all he wants to talk about. And sometimes I tease him a little and say, how are you coming? Oh, wonderful, wonderful. He even invited me to join, but I don't think I want to at my age. But when they gather together, they gather unto barn dancing.

I suppose it's harmless enough, I don't know. I never did and don't intend to start it. I don't recommend it. But they gather for that. Others gather for literary reasons. Some gather to hear concerts, and that's a legitimate thing. Some gather to hear political speeches, that's a legitimate thing. Some gather to hear scientific papers read, and that's a legitimate thing.

Well, there are many reasons why people gather together, but a church gathers for only one reason. They are a Spirit-drawn company gathered unto Jesus Christ the Lord. They're gathered to Him, and that's their reason for gathering. And there isn't any other reason, or if there are other reasons, there are secondary and tertiary and on down the line. They are not primary. Spirit draws us together, and we are gathered as a delegation. We are gathered as a delegation unto that, making up that company.

I don't know whether I overdo this or not, but I think that this is one of the most delightful passages in the entire Scripture. We are come, we are come unto Mount Zion, of course that's a spiritual Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels.

God, why can't I see the angels? Why are we so blind? Why are we so given up to mechanical things and material things? Why do we see walls and chairs and seats and pulpits and pianos? Why don't we know that we are gathered unto an innumerable company of angels and to the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. And there we are gathered unto all these, these are thy riches, O Israel, and these make you rich, and you need very little else.

Well, you know when Moses blew the trumpet, all Israel gathered together, whatever they were doing, women busy in their tents with their housework, taking care of the baby, and men busy doing whatever the men were doing, and the children busy playing.

But when the high note of the silver trumpet sounded, all Israel gathered unto Moses. And then the trumpet sounded again, and the clouds started, and away they went through the wilderness on their way to the promised land. Then they were on the way, and that comes to my second text, where they met these men of God, and they exhorted and confirmed the souls of the disciples, and exhorted them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation come into the kingdom of God.

Now we are coming up to the end of the year, and some of us have lost loved ones from our home this year. Some of us have had loved ones leave and go to far parts of the world, and we have all lost good Christian friends who have moved away to many parts of this country and have gone from us. There have been distress and trouble, and many of us have suffered physically this year.

There have been a lot of troubles, but I want to exhort you to go on this morning. I want to exhort you. I don't want to teach the Bible to you because you know your Bible, but I want to base my exhortation upon what you already know about the Bible and teach you that you ought to go on.

Why? Why? If I had to answer the devil, I wouldn't honor him by talking to him. I wouldn't. If he were to come, I wouldn't answer him. I would not reply. But if I had to answer him or had to answer anybody, let's settle for communists. Let's say that some communist would come to me and say, now you are entering into a new year. You've been a Christian during 1958, and you've had a lot of troubles and all the rest. What's the idea of your going on?

You know what I could say to that man? I could say to him, oh, my brother, I'm a weak man and I may backslide before Groundhog's Day and have to be prayed back again, I don't know, because let him that standeth take heed lest he fall, and I don't know, I'm not boasting. Peter boasted and then he denied his Lord before nine o'clock the next morning. So, I'm not boasting and saying what I'm going to do, but I'm going to give him reasons for hoping that I'll be doing, what I think I'll be doing, and that is following on in the way.

Well, Earth's greatest figure leads on out of there. Never forget that my friend. We have great figures, great men, you know, and they come up and go down and come up and go down, but He came up and never went down and never went into eclipse. He's the star that never sets and never has and never will, and He's the bright morning star and He shines out there and He leads on.

Some will be following Bob Kennedy this year or next and some will be following Paul Douglas and some will be following somebody else. And those men, I suppose, mean well and are as good as the average rank and file of men. I'm not speaking against them at all. I only say that I'm not following any man. I've not picked any man I want to follow.

I thank God for Wesley, I thank God for Henry Suso and John Tauler and Augustine, and I thank God for the great hymn writers and the good men who have written good helpful books. Of course, I'm grateful for all of them, but I'm not following any of them, because the world's greatest Figure stands there supreme above them all, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

They've had Him in a manger over the last few days, the last ten days. He's been shrunk back to a babe again and they've been carrying Him around in plastic, and He's been a babe in the manger. No, no, that babe hasn't been in that manger for nearly two thousand years, my friends. And though we celebrate the birthday, what we think is the birthday, though nobody knows, remember that that Babe hasn't been in that manger for two thousand years.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, is not a babe anymore. He is the man Christ Jesus, having gone through death and risen and now living at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He certainly is the Shining Star. He's the greatest of all Adam's sons, because He's also the Son of God.

So, I couldn't follow anybody else. I don't know anybody else who could I follow. Could I follow Socrates. Socrates is dead and he never rose from the dead. Should I follow Joseph Smith? Joseph Smith is dead too. Could I follow Mary Baker Eddy? She died. They expected her to rise, but she disappointed them. She's still dead, and the way things are, I don't ever want to see her or have her get up.

But Jesus Christ rose and lives, and He has the appeal and the magnetic attraction that no other one does in all the wide world. So, I could reply, well, I'm going to follow anybody, right or wrong, I'm going to pick the greatest of them all, whose name is Jesus. So, the best I know, I'm going to be a follower of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Now, I'll tell you another thing. Have you ever stopped to think about it? You Christians have invested an awful lot now. You've invested so much now. Think of you older Christians, what you've invested. Think of what some of you could have had if you hadn't invested so much in the kingdom of God. Think about it now, some of you.

Look back over your lives and think how much you've given to the Lord's work. Think of the tens of thousands of dollars and running into the perhaps hundreds that some of you have given to the work of the Lord. Think if you had that now, what a split-level home you could have with a picture window, and what all you could have, and how you could go to Bermuda. And up into Canada when it gets hot.

But you invested, you invested in this Kingdom. You know, there's such a thing as putting so much in that you'd be a double-barreled fool if you gave the whole thing up. You've just invested so much you can't afford to go back. You can't afford to say, well, I'm not going to work so hard at the things of God this year because I just feel that I deserve a little vacation from it all. No, no, no.

You don't deserve any vacation because you've laid up your riches in heaven, and there they lie, and there they are, and they're there for you. And so therefore let no man take thy crown, and let no man take away thy riches. I've put so much in and have so much there that there's no place else to go.

Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go? Can you think of anybody? Can you think of anybody? I can't think of anybody that I'd want to follow because I've put so much in the following of Christ that my riches all lie there anyway. Would you want to follow the latest scientific venture? I just learned a horrible thing this week, this last week, a horrible thing. I think it's one of the most awful things.

I said last week that if anybody went to the moon that I didn't want to go. But I don't know, but I may change my mind about that now. Because you know what I have learned this last week? I have learned that the Ford Motor Company and the Coca-Cola Company have for the last couple of years foreseen the talking satellite, foreseen it.

Only a few days ago President Eisenhower was saying peace on earth, goodwill to men from a hunk of metal flying around up in the air, that satellite. But you know that those two companies, the advertising departments of those companies had foreseen this two years ago and have been quietly working to put their advertising in a satellite and send it around the world, changing the language with the longitude or wherever it is. If it's going over Holland it'll be saying drink Coca-Cola in Dutch and when it gets down to France it'll be saying drink Coca-Cola in French and when it gets into Africa it'll be saying drink Coca, I don't know, I think the moon might be a place of refuge, a place to hide in an hour like this.

How much longer is God Almighty going to let the peddlers take over His world? God made a garden eastward in Eden and he put flowers and trees and beauty there and put men there to relax and rest under the shady bowers.

But we've gone mad in our selling. And over the radio this last week when you'd be listening to a beautiful Christmas carol, the next would be, and so the thus and thus beer company sends you their finest holiday greetings. And then they would break into an anthem telling about Burpo Beer, the finest beer on the market. I wonder how much longer God Almighty is going to allow this thing to go on. I don't know, brother, I don't know.

But I do know this, that you and I are going to see some tribulations ahead, we're going to see some hard times. We've spent a lot of time, some of us have, we've had so much money and so many fine things and so many gadgets and we've pushed so many plastic buttons and had so many little machines hum into our workforce. We haven't known in this country what it is to endure anything.

And when we got so we had a few people out of work, we sighed a sigh like the Israelites in bondage and called it a recession. And yet everybody had everything. Brethren, we've got some troubles out there ahead and how are you going to go into them? You've got to go into them one way or another.

And I recommend you go into them following the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth, because you can't even think of anything else now, it's too late. You've been a Christian so long, some of you, that even if you've only been a Christian twenty minutes, you're a child of God and your name's written in the Lamb's Book of Life and God holds you in His hand and no man can pluck you out of His hand.

Well, another thing, some have loved faces looking down. I'm a very cautious man and I speak on these tender things only very rarely. Some have faces looking down and they expect you, you're discouraged and want to quit and say, ah, I'm giving the whole business up.

I tell you that there are faces looking down, they say that it used to be among the sheep, an old shepherd when he wanted to get his flock across a river, he'd carry the lambs over and then the old sheep would swim. They'd swim across because the lambs were already over there.

A lot of people, any of you that have been a long time around our church ever sat down and counted up how many have gone from us these last times? Most recent one was Helen Asplund. They've gone, they've gone, they're not going down the valley one by one with their faces toward the setting of the sun. Whoever wrote that ought to have his liver looked into because he was sick. We're not going down the valley one by one, we're going up the mountain toward the sunrise, one after the other.

Am I going to live long enough to bury a whole generation? I've almost done it, a whole generation of God's dear Saints, and I've laid them away all around this whole area. I've planted seeds in the ground by the grace of God and sent earth to earth over I don't know how many scores. Their prayers aren't dead. He catches all our prayers in his bottle and all our tears, and their prayers haven't become ineffective because they're gone. They're still effective, yonder, and I know they're praying for me.

Godliness pays big dividends, my friends, and no matter what the future may hold, what it may be there next year, godliness pays big dividends. It's always right to be right, and it's always best to be on God's side and to take God's side and to live right.

Some of you could live a smoother, easier life if you weren't so faithful, I'll tell you that. The devil's told you that, so it's nothing new to you. You could get along a lot easier if you didn't give so generously and get up and go to church when you felt like sleeping.

You didn't get out and do God's service when you feel like sitting in front of the TV. You could get along a lot easier, put on a little more weight, feel a little more comfortable or uncomfortable. But I'll tell you, godliness still pays, brothers and sisters, it still pays to follow God. It still pays to be on the good side.

I've had funerals of people that I knew hadn't been very big successes. That is, you know, there hadn't been great successes as the world or even as the church counts success. But as I thought over their lives, I remembered one thing. If they knew what was right, you could be sure they were always over on that side. God takes that into account. A man knows what's right, and he's always over on that side; he's found over there, and it pays, pays.

Well, another thing is, the best company on earth is in the church, and I'm going to stick to it myself. I'll have to be chased out of the church, or out of the church, blacklisted and forbidden to enter any Christian assembly, otherwise, you're going to find me in the house of God on the Lord's Day, and sometimes in between. Because everything else being said, the best company in the world is the company that meets unto Jesus.

You say, but I happen to know there are some hypocrites there. Yes, so do I, so do I. So did Jesus. One of you shall betray me, said Jesus. And each one said, is it I, is it I, is it I? Even Judas said, is it I? Sure, Jesus had His hypocrites. The first church had their Ananias and Sapphira.

Paul had his Demas, the young man that he leaned on. Here was this old balding apostle, wearing himself to a shred, traveling around up all hours of the night, out in deep, driven out of cities, chased and whipped and beaten and thrown into jail. And he got a hold of a young fellow named Demas. And Demas was all full of fire, and Paul said to

God, O God, maybe, this is my boy. And so, he leaned on Demas. And just when Paul got in a tight place, Demas remembered the old crowd and went back. Paul said, Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. I know that there's a Demas, he'll be around, I know it.

I get literature, I could show it to you now, if the janitor hasn't carried it out and burnt it. I can show you literature that comes, Christian literature that comes from Communism. Christian Communism, Communist Christianity, if there's such an unholy thing, praising the freedom they have in Czechoslovakia or Russia or someplace else, praising the Communists for their religious freedom. I know that, and I know that there's a lot wrong with the Church.

But brother, give me five hundred people who regularly gather unto Jesus, and then show me five hundred that don't, and put them side by side and take your choice. I know that side I'll be on, if God will bless me and help me, and the people put up with me. I know whose side I'll be on this year. I say, a man is weak and it's easy to fall, not fall from grace, but fall in grace. God will keep you.

I'm talking about this miserable business of getting cold or lukewarm. They'll put up with me, the best company in the world, not this church necessarily, but the church, God's children, wherever they're from.

Go into any town, any town, get up in an airplane, say to the pilot, what's that town down there? And he says, that's Pittsburgh, all right, land. He lands. Go and hunt the best people, where'll you go, nightclubs? No, where'll you go, bowling alleys, pool rooms, saloons? No. If you're looking for the best people, hunt up a gospel church. They may be a little narrow-minded, may be a little narrow-minded, I don't say they weren't narrow-minded Christians, but I do say, nevertheless, they're the best in the city. And if they'll put up with me, I want to put up with them.

Well, time is going to be short anyhow. It doesn't seem very long since we ushered in 1958, now 1958's a tattered relic, very little left, just a shred or two, then it's gone, then we enter 1959. I don't know how many of these years we're going to have yet, before our Savior comes.

Time is short at any rate, Christ will return, or death will come, but in patience possess ye your souls, for there is a crown at the end of the way. Take heed that no man follows, no man takes thy crown but follow the Lord and trust Him and put your hand in His and He'll lead you through.

The Son of God goes forth to war, the kingly crown to gain, his blood-red banner streams afar, who follows in his train. Who best can bear his cup of grief, triumphant over pain, God remembers the rest of it, who patient bears his cross, he follows in his train.

So, let's follow in the train of the Savior this year, let's expect trouble, let's expect trouble. Don't be like the newly commissioned second lieutenant that was thrown suddenly up to the battlefield. He let out a yell and started to run and said, they're shooting at me. The tough old sergeant said, well, what are you up there for?

So, I say to you, they'll be shooting at you this year, but what are you up there for anyhow? Of course we'll be shot at. Some of us will have bullet holes in our ears. Before the year is over, if the Lord lays a hand on us and heals us, if we keep our hearts right and keep right inside, we can endure an awful lot of pressure from the outside. When you're not right on the inside, you'll collapse. When you're right inside, no pressure can collapse you, but when you're not right inside, you collapse like an eggshell.

So keep right inside, walk with God, make the Book, make the Book, I've decided that by the grace of God, I'm going to read the Book more and other things less. Study the Book, learn it, memorize passages. I'm memorizing the Book of Revelation, part of it at any rate. Let's memorize, let's study, let's live by it and above all things, let's obey and be prayerful, and God will lead us through. He will make the darkness light before us. He will make the crooked straight before us, and all our battles He will fight before us, and the high place He'll bring down. Amen.