WATCH NIGHTS AND NEW YEAR'S DAYS OF THE PAST
A Compilation By Duane V. Maxey From The HDM Library

"...at the coming in of the year..." (2 Kings 13:30)

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INTRODUCTION

Even with the completion of this compilation I did not exhaust the store of information in the HDM Library on this subject. Perhaps another time, I shall be able to create another compilation like this, or add to this one. For now, with the following, I forbear.

Watch-Night Services may have originated with the Wesleys. The reader will note that the first one given in the main body of this compilation was observed by them on the night of December 31, 1738 -- January 1, 1740. Thus, John and Charles Wesley themselves observed such before they later enjoined the observance of "Watch-Nights" upon Methodists in 1789. It should also be noted that originally, Methodist "Watch-Nights" were often observed on many other dates besides the "Watch-Night" service on New Year's Eve.

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JAMES MCGEE'S COMMENTS ABOUT THE WATCHNIGHT SERVICE
From hdm0839 -- "The March Of Methodism From Epworth Around The Globe" by James McGee

The Watchnight service, established at Bristol in 1740, was intended to draw away the Kingswood colliers from the scenes of midnight dissipation at the ale houses. At first held monthly, it came finally to be held only on the last night of the year. Preaching, prayer, and song filled the hours till the new year was ushered in.

* * *
Watch-Night Services

The first notice that we have of this service is found in Mr. Wesley's journal of 1742. In 1789 it was enjoined "that every watch-night should be held till midnight." On the last night of every year this solemn service is held in all the chapels, generally beginning at 10:30. The minister commences with singing and prayer, reading an appropriate chapter and singing, -- he then preaches a Sermon or gives an address. Sometimes local preachers are requested to give short addresses as well as the minister. Thus, in singing, exhortation, and prayer, the congregation is engaged until a few minutes before twelve, when they are called upon to unite in silent prayer. Shortly after the clock has struck, announcing the advent of the new year, the well-known hymn commencing, "Come let us anew Our journey pursue," is sung, and prayer closes the service.

01 -- THE WESLEYS -- DECEMBER 31, 1738 -- JANUARY 1, 1739
From hdm0427 -- "The Possibilities Of Prayer" by Edward McKendree Bounds

It might be in order to give an instance or two in the life of Rev John Wesley, showing some remarkable displays of spiritual power. Many times it is stated this noted man gathered his company together, and prayed all night, or till the mighty power of God came upon them. It was at a watch night service, at Fetter Lane, December 31, 1738, when Charles and John Wesley with Whitefield, sat up till after midnight singing and praying. This is the account:

About three o'clock in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, so that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we had recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God! We acknowledge thee to be the Lord!"

02 -- FIRST METHODIST WATCH-NIGHT -- DECEMBER 31, 1740 -- JANUARY 1, 1741
From hdm2030 -- "Wesley And Early Methodism" by Angela Kirkham Davis

When and where was the first Methodist watch-night held?

On the last night of the year 1740, in Bristol, under the supervision of Mr. Wesley.

How is a watch-night conducted?

On the last night of every year this solemn service is held and continued until a little past twelve o'clock. It is usually commenced by singing and prayer, after which the time is occupied in preaching, singing, exhortation, and prayer; sometimes the Lord's Supper is administered, and, not infrequently, a part of the evening is devoted to love-feast exercises. A little before twelve o'clock
all present are invited to kneel before God in silent prayer, and thus remain until the closing of the year, when the pastor, in vocal prayer, commends the congregation to the divine guidance and protection, and closes by singing, (usually the covenant hymn,) and the benediction. These meetings were originally held almost exclusively by the Methodists, but they have been introduced into some of the churches of other denominations.

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03 -- FRANCIS ASBURY -- DECEMBER 31, 1771 -- JANUARY 1, 1772
From hdm1619 -- "Lost Chapters Recovered From The Early History Of American Methodism" by Joseph B. Wakeley

Mr. Asbury introduced all the peculiarities of Methodism. He held a "watch-night," New Year's eve, January 1, 1772, one of the first of a long series of watch-nights that have been held in America. It was a time of peculiar solemnity, and the power of God was felt by the people.

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04 -- FRANCIS ASBURY -- DECEMBER 31, 1775 -- JANUARY 1, 1776
From hdm0520 -- "Memoirs Of Mr. Wesley's Missionaries To America" compiled from authentic sources by Rev. P. P. Sandford
(From Asbury's Journal)

Monday 25. Being Christmas-day, I preached from 1 Tim. i, 15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." My spirit was at liberty, and we were much blessed both in preaching and class-meeting. Hitherto the Lord hath helped me, both in soul and body, beyond my expectation. May I cheerfully do and suffer all his will, endure to the end, and be eternally saved!

Wednesday 27. We have awful reports of slaughter at Norfolk and the Great Bridge; but I am at a happy distance from them, and my soul keeps close to Jesus Christ. And as we know not what a day may bring forth, I can say with St. Paul, "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain."

Lord's day 31. Being the last day of the year, we held a watch-night at S. Y.'s chapel, beginning at six and ending at twelve o'clock. It was a profitable time, and we had much of the power of God.

Monday, January 1, 1776. I am now entering on a new year, and am of late constantly happy, feeling my heart much taken up with God, and hope thus to live and thus to die. Or if there should be any alteration, may it be for the better, and not for the worse! This is my earnest desire and prayer to God.

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05 -- FREEBORN GARRETTSON -- DECEMBER 31, 1782 -- JANUARY 1, 1783
"On the 30th I set out to visit the societies in Kent and Newcastle. I generally preach once and twice every day, beside meeting the classes; and I bless God for the sweet consolation I have. Many are happily going on to perfection. I think if I know myself, I have set out in this new year, (1783,) to live a life of devotion to God."

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06 -- HESTER ANN ROGERS -- DECEMBER 31, 1787 -- JANUARY 1, 1788

Cork, Jan. 24, 1788

On Christmas morning, at four o'clock, the preaching-house was well filled, and God was truly present to bless; -- many were awakened and four justified at the watch-night on New Year's eve. Several also found pardon at the love-feast, and many witnessed a good confession: but the time of renewing our covenant exceeded all: fourteen souls were that day born of God: some at their classes, and the rest at that sweet solemn season of the covenant. The house was truly shaken (I mean every soul therein) by the power of God. I believe none present, preachers or people, will ever forget it. I trust I never shall. It was none other than the antechamber of glory to my soul -- the house of God -- the gate of heaven. O how was I filled with his presence! how did I bask in the beams of his love! how was I made to feel his immeasurable fullness all my own, through covenant blood divine! Several were perfected in love, and several backsliders restored. Since this, between thirty and forty have joined the society; several of whom date their deep awakenings from the covenant night. Mr. Rogers saw it expedient, on that occasion, to give notes of admittance to some who were halting between two opinions; and most of them were then, and are now, determined to be the Lord's.

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07 -- FRANCIS ASBURY -- DECEMBER 31, 1799 -- JANUARY 1, 1800

That bishop Bishop Asbury held Washington in great esteem may be seen from the following remarks he made on hearing of the death of that great man. He was then at Charleston, South Carolina, and had just adjourned a conference which had been held in that city, January 1800. He says, --

"Slow moved the northern post on the eve of new year's day, and brought the distressing information of the death of Washington, who departed this life December 14, 1799.

"Washington, the calm, intrepid chief, the disinterested friend, first father, and temporal saviour of his country under divine protection and direction. A universal cloud sat upon the faces of the citizens of Charleston -- the pulpits clothed in black -- the bells muffled -- the paraded soldiery -- the public oration decreed to be delivered on Friday the 14th of this month -- a marble statue to be placed in some proper situation, -- these were the expressions of sorrow, and these the marks of respect paid by his fellow-citizens to this great man. I am disposed to lose sight of all but
Washington. Matchless man! At all times he acknowledged the providence of God, and never was he ashamed of his Redeemer. We believe he died not fearing death. In his will he ordered the manumission of his slaves -- a true son of liberty in all points."

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08 -- A. G. ROSZEL -- DECEMBER 31, 1817 -- JANUARY 1, 1818
From hdm0671 -- "Revival Reports In 1818" compiled by Duane V. Maxey, taken from issues of The Methodist Magazine
During the year 1818

To the Editors of the Methodist Magazine
Baltimore, February 16, 1818

...New Year's eve we held a Watch-night in all our houses of worship, which was owned of God: several were awakened and converted to God. Our prospects became encouraging.-- The congregations began to increase, and the work of God powerfully commenced in all our houses. Penitents began to press through the crowd to the altar, crying for mercy, and in earnest prayer seeking the Lord. Thus encouraged and still longing to see greater displays of the power of God in the conversion of sinners, and sanctification of believers, we appointed, for all who would religiously observe Friday as a day of fasting and prayer, to meet in our churches alternately, and join in humiliation, confession, and earnest supplication to God, to revive his work more gloriously among us. Hundreds gladly joined; and we have regularly met on each Friday in one of our churches, and our gracious Lord has been with us.

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09 -- ADAM CLARKE -- DECEMBER 31, 1827 -- JANUARY 1, 1828
From hdm1586 -- "The Life And Labors Of Adam Clarke" by John Middleton Hare

The reader may be supposed to be familiar with the watchnights of ' the Wesleyan Methodists. Formerly they were held quarterly; but they are now, and for some years have been, confined to new-year's-eve. To these seasons of public worship Dr. Clarke was very much attached; and, up to the year 1828, he had uniformly availed himself of them. But now his health forbade him to venture out in the night air. He watched, however, by himself, as we find from the following extract of a letter addressed to his daughter on the first 'day of the year 1828: -" I kept watch by myself in 'the parlor, and was in solemn prayer for you all, when the clock struck twelve, and for some time after. Even to watch by myself I found to be a good thing: I felt that it might be the last watch-night I might ever celebrate. I remained up till the preacher and our people returned from chapel. I had an excellent fire and a good supper for them. I made them sit down, while I served them myself. They were pleased; and thus we were all pleased."

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10 -- ADAM CLARKE -- DECEMBER 31, 1829 -- JANUARY1, 1830
From hdm1586 -- "The Life And Labors Of Adam Clarke" by John Middleton Hare
The attachment of Dr. Clarke to the observances called Watch-nights, particularly as applied to the expiration of the old and the commencement of the new year, has already been noticed. He distinguished the opening of the year 1830 by making several resolutions, each of which is too remarkable to be passed over. The first was to read the Bible more regularly, and to get through it once more before he should die. To this resolution he refers in a letter addressed to a very young female, the daughter of the husband of one of his daughters. The passage may be given as an evidence of his attachment to young persons, as the destined leaders of another age:-- "I hope you read your Bible. What think you? After having for more than half a century read the Bible so much, I formed the resolution, on Jan. 1, 1830, to read the Bible through once more, beginning with the first chapter of Genesis, and the first of Matthew, binding myself to read a chapter of each every day. I read the New Testament in Greek, and the Old Testament in English, collating it occasionally with the Hebrew. I bind myself to one chapter in each daily; but I often read more, and have, since the first of last January, read over the five books of Moses and the four Gospels. This I find very profitable. Now, I commend this kind of reading to you; and read so that your mind shall feel the reading, and then the reading will profit you."

His second resolution, referring to matters which require explanation, was as follows:--"To bear the evils and calamities of life with less pain of spirit; if I suffer wrong, to leave it to God to right me; to murmur against no dispensation of his providence; to bear ingratitude and unkindness, as things totally beyond my control, and, consequently, things on account of which I should not distress myself; and, though friends and confidants should fail, to depend more on my everlasting Friend, who never can fail, and who, to the unkindly treated, will cause all such things to work together for their good. As to wicked men, I must suffer them; for the wicked will deal wickedly. That is their nature; and, from them, nothing else can be reasonably expected. [39]"

At the third resolution, which, however, was not so strictly observed as the former two, those who have read the foregoing pages of this narrative will not be surprised:-- "I have resolved to withdraw as much as possible from the cares and anxieties of public life, having grappled with them as long as the number of my years can well permit; and, in this respect; I have a conscience as clear as a diamond, 'that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have' had my conversation among men;' and now I feel, that, with the necessaries and conveniences of life, I can cheerfully take up, in the wilderness, the lodging-place of a way-faring man. I no longer like strange company of any kind: not that I have fallen or would fall out with' the world; for, thank God, I feel nothing' of the misanthrope: I am ready to spend and be spent for the salvation or good of men."

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11 -- WILLIAM MCKENDREE -- DECEMBER 31, 1833 -- JANUARY 1, 1834
From hdm0563 -- "Life And Times Of William McKendree" by Robert Paine

"On Wednesday evening, December 31, 1833, I attended a watch night in the new church in Nashville. It was a solemn time. I felt my spiritual strength renewed. I returned with Brother Hill and his family, and at four o'clock I arose refreshed and in a comfortable state of health."
"About ten o'clock, January 1, 1834, took passage on the spacious steamer Tennesseean, commanded by Captain Thomas P. Minor. The river was low. We arrived at the Harpeth Shoals in the evening. The steamer Pacific was aground. We put off one hundred and ninety bales of cotton and succeeded with difficulty in getting over the shoals.

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A Second Account Of The Same
From hdm0575 -- "William McKendree, A Biographical Study" by E. E. Hoss

The return trip from Philadelphia to Tennessee almost completely exhausted Bishop McKendree's scanty reserve of physical force; but rest and kind attentions revived him to such an extent that he was able to move about carefully later in the season, to attend the Tennessee Conference, which met in Pulaski on November 7, 1833, and, -- in the absence of Bishop Roberts, to preside and make the appointments with the help of Robert Paine and Lewis Garrett, whom he personally designated as his helpers. Twice in December following he preached in the new McKendree Church, at Nashville, and on the last night of the year conducted a watch-night service at the same place. Having renewed his journal, he made the following entry:

[It was a solemn time. I felt my spiritual strength renewed. I returned with Brother Hill and his family, and at four o'clock I arose refreshed.]

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12 -- PAUL BRODBECK -- DECEMBER 31, 1837 -- JANUARY 1, 1840
From hdm2038 -- "Experience Of German Methodist Preachers" collected and arranged by Adam Miller

In the spring of 1837 we moved to Portsmouth, Ohio. I commenced going to the Methodist church with my wife, and gradually became attached to their doctrine and modes of worship; but at the same time I was very fond of the ball-room and the dance.

On the evening of the 31st of December, 1837, we had a great ball in town, and at the same time the Methodists held a watch-night meeting. After spending the forepart of the night at the ball-room, dancing, suddenly something seemed to say to me, "The Methodists hold a watch-night, and you must go and see what they are doing." Accordingly I left the ball-room about nine o'clock, and went to the church and heard a sermon by Rev. Henry Turner, then preacher in charge of Bigelow Chapel. I listened with great attention, but could not hear any thing that -- as I then thought -- suited my case. At the close of the sermon the minister descended from the pulpit, came into the altar, and invited all seekers of religion to come forward and kneel around the altar for the prayers of the Church, and seek the salvation of their souls.

While some were going forward for prayer and some were joining the Church, my conscience told me, "You must go, for you are a great sinner, or you will be eternally lost." Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, but yielded to the convictions of the moment, went forward, joined the Church, and threw myself down at the altar, and prayed and wrestled like
Jacob of old, till nearly twelve o'clock at night, when, by the grace of God, I was enabled to shout "glory," having obtained redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of my sins. My wife all this time thought I was at the ball-room; and when I came home and told her what the Lord had done for me, she also shouted to God for his great mercy.

My father's family had all practiced dancing, and I was fond of it; and the next day after my conversion my sister urged me to dance with her. I reluctantly consented to do so, not being sufficiently aware of the sin and folly of such amusements. After I had danced two or three rounds with her I checked, myself with the sudden thought, What am I doing? I felt immediately that I had done wrong, ran off and left her, and hid myself in the haymow, where I commenced again to cry for mercy. I went mourning for about five weeks on account of this sin, when at a class meeting God again, for Christ's sake, gave me a conscience void of offense, and I could once more rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

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13 -- GEORGE MULLER -- DECEMBER 31, 1839 -- JANUARY 1, 1840
From hdm0691 -- "Answered Prayer In Missionary Service" by Basil William Miller

Under the date of July 22, 1838, Mr. Muller relates how, when he was walking in his garden, all of a sudden the great need of the orphan house was brought to his mind. Immediately he was led to say: "Jesus in His love and power has hitherto supplied me with what I have needed for the Orphanage, and in the same unchangeable love and power He will provide for what I may need for the future. A flow of joy came into my soul."

After this brief season of prayer, Mr. Muller relates, "About one minute later a letter was brought to me enclosing a bill for $100."

The following year on watch night an incident occurred which showed the faith of this man of God. A woman in need handed Mr. Muller an offering about an hour past midnight, and Muller says: "I resolved therefore without opening the paper to return it. This was done when I knew there was not enough on hand to meet the expenses of the day."

Seven hours later, about eight o'clock in the morning, a man brought $25 for the home.

"Observe, the brother was led to bring it at once." Thus God honored Mr. Muller's faith at the very moment when the money was needed, because he gave back the funds to a poor "lady who needed it to pay her debts more," as Muller expressed it, "than the orphans needed the money."

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14 -- LUDWIG S. JACOBY -- DECEMBER 31, 1839 -- JANUARY 1, 1840
From hdm2038 -- "Experience Of German Methodist Preachers" collected and arranged by Adam Miller
I now commenced tearing myself loose from my former associates; and, at the first opportunity, on Monday before Christmas, 1839, I joined the Church during love-feast. As those were called to approach the altar who wished to interest in the prayers of the pious, I did not confer with flesh and blood, and for eight evenings went thither. Twelve days I sought the Lord earnestly, and attended the watch-night. The new year was commenced with prayer, and the children of God sang the songs of Zion, and were filled with joy. I remained in prayer on my knees. I thought that my heart would break under the burden that lay upon me. I sighed for deliverance; and, blessed be God! not in vain. The Lord visited me, and I was blessed with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. I rose from my knees rejoicing, and embraced heartily my, till then almost unknown, brethren, and joyfully declared that the Lord had delivered me. Never shall I forget that hour, neither here on earth nor in heaven. The Lord Jesus showed his mercy to a great sinner, and his grace was the more magnified. I had a happy New-Year's day. In the afternoon, however, the former friend who first took me to the Methodist church, came to see me; he mocked, and scoffed, and called me strange names. I sought to quiet him by giving him an account of my conversion; but he only became the more abusive, and was actually about attempting to beat me. I thereupon said to him, quite composedly, "If you had treated me so before I was converted I would have put you out of doors; but now I will rather go myself." So I went away sadly, and I understood he quit my house in a rage. This circumstance made me dejected, and in the evening I went anew to the mourners' bench. Brother Nast asked me if I had not professed to have found the Savior? I told him I had, and related to him the reason of my mourning. He exhorted me to earnest prayer; and soon I found the joy which I had experienced return to my heart.

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15 -- MAXWELL PIERSON GADDIS -- DECEMBER 31, 1842 -- JANUARY 1, 1843
From hdm0730 -- "Foot-Prints Of An Itinerant" by Maxwell Pierson Gaddis,

January 1, 1843. -- This has been a day of great comfort and peace to my soul. While calling to remembrance the goodness of God my heart has been deeply affected. I have again renewed my covenant; I am resolved to devote myself more fully to God, and labor more faithfully in his vineyard. This is a beautiful Sabbath evening. The new year broke upon my vision in a milder climate and beneath a serener sky than I have ever seen before. We have now shaken hands with a cheerless northern winter, and are traveling rapidly onward to the land of sunny smiles. The new year! the past with its sunlight and shade rushed upon my mind. The pleasure of dwelling upon the past -- in calling to mind hallowed associations, endearing friendships, and sweet communion with kindred spirits -- what pen can portray? Early in the morning of that memorable day the following note was handed me by one of the gentleman passengers:

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16 -- FOUNDER OF BETHEL SHIP -- DECEMBER 31, 1845 -- JANUARY 1, 1846
From hdm0720 -- "Cyclopedia Of Methodism -- Letter-B" by Matthew Simpson

BETHEL SHIP. -- When the Scandinavian emigration began to set rapidly on our American shores the attention of the Rev. Mr. Hedstrom, of the New York Conference, himself a Scandinavian, was drawn toward them. He opened a room in his own house to hold a
prayer-meeting with his countrymen. Afterwards he worshipped in a public school-room. When
that was torn down he became despondent, until a vessel at the foot of Carlisle Street, Pier No. 11,
North River, was opened to him. His first service was held in it as a watchnight, on New Year’s
eve preceding January, 1846.

He continued to hold services in that vessel until it became too old and to small. A
congregation had been organized, many had been converted some of whom had returned as
missionaries to Denmark and Norway. The trustees succeeded in procuring a larger vessel, which
was opened for service in June, 1857. On that ship services were held, not only on the Sabbath but
on week evenings, and it became a home for many a sick and weary emigrant. The converts from
this ship are scattered over the Northwest, and through Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. With the
increasing of improvements and demand for dock room the ship has been abandoned.

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17 -- WILLIAM TAYLOR -- DECEMBER 31, 1849 -- JANUARY 1, 1850
From hdm0895 -- "Story Of My Life, Part A (Chapters 1-21)" by William Taylor

On New Year’s Eve, at the end of 1849, we held our first watchnight meeting in San
Francisco. I preached from the text, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward
me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto
the Lord now in the presence of all his people." After preaching, a majority of those present spoke
of the benefits they had received from God during the past year, and their deliverances from the
dangers of the deep and of the desert.

Then on our knees we sang the covenant hymn:

"Come, let us use the grace divine,
And all, with one accord,
In a perpetual covenant join
Ourselves to Christ the Lord."

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18 -- MAXWELL PIERSON GADDIS -- DECEMBER 31, 1851 -- JANUARY 1, 1852
From hdm0730 -- "Foot-Prints Of An Itinerant" by Maxwell Pierson Gaddis

At our first quarterly meeting, on the 25th of October, 1851, the Spirit of the Lord was
poured out, and, during the following week, fourteen were added to the Church. The work went on
gradually; some were converted almost every week. Our "watch-night" meeting was one of unusual
interest. I had the assistance of the local brethren, who rendered me valuable aid whenever I
needed it. About half past eleven o'clock I preached on Jeremiah vi, 4: "Woe unto us, for the day
goeth away, and the shadows of the evening are stretched out." While urging the congregation to
improve the present period, or "day of salvation" -- for if suffered to pass it could not be
recalled-a deep and solemn sense of the presence of God rested on the whole assembly. "The day
goeth away, and the shadows of the evening are stretched out." It was twelve o'clock.
"The year has gone, and with it
Many a glorious throng of happy dreams.
Its mark is on each brow,
Its shadow in each heart;
In its swift course it waved its scepter
O'er the beautiful, and they are not!
It laid its pallid hand upon the strong man,
And the haughty form is fallen,
And the flashing eye is dim!
It trod the halls of revelry,
Where thronged the blest and joyous,
And the tearful wail of stricken ones is heard,
Where first the song and reckless shout resounded!
It passed o'er the battle plain,
Where sword, and spear, and shield
Flashed in the light of midday,
And the strength of serried host is shivered;
And the grass, green from the soul of carnage,
Waves above the crushed and molded skeleton,
And faded like a wreath of mist at eve;
Yet, ere it melted in the viewless air,
It heralded its millions to their home,
In the dim land of dreams!"

An awful sense of the majesty of God awed every soul into reverence. We then bowed in silent prayer before the Lord our God, after which we united in singing the "covenant hymn" on our knees. I then opened the doors of the Church, and seven persons presented themselves for membership, all of whom are still valuable members of Christ's "visible body." The glory of God filled the temple, and many of his saints shouted for joy. I then went into the pulpit, and read from the twenty-fourth of Joshua the following appropriate passages "And the people said unto Joshua, Nay, but we will serve the Lord. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words on the book of the law of God, and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us. It shall be, therefore, a witness unto you lest ye deny your God. So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance." I then pronounced the benediction, and we all retired with joyful hearts to our homes. Thus ended the most profitable and interesting "watch-night" meeting that I ever held. It was followed by a glorious revival that lasted till some time in March.

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A thought came into my mind which was made a great blessing to my soul. I thought I was like a tree planted by a river of water, (Psa. i, 3,) as I have often seen in the country, and by the continual running of the water the earth is all washed away by little and little, till the tree falls, as saith the preacher, Eccles. xi, 3; and, glory be to God, I now feel I am just on the brink of Jordan. Blessed be the Lord, the earth is indeed almost washed away -- there are but a very few small fine roots that have got hold of the earth; a very few floods more will wash it all away, and then I feel I shall float over Jordan into the sweet land of Canaan." The watch-night of 1851, and the covenant Sunday of 1852, were seasons of the most solemn self-examination, and also of the highest devotional enjoyment, to our departed friend. Through this year he continued to enjoy most largely the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, though at times he suffered keenly from the assault of temptation.

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God pardoned my sins in the winter of 1820-21. On the 27th of December, 1856, in the evening, in Central Methodist Episcopal Church in Newark, N.J., through the blood of Jesus Christ, God cleansed my heart from all sin, and the Holy Ghost sanctified me wholly. I think Mr. Wesley says it is next to a miracle for any one to receive that blessing and never lose it. Then I surely am next to a miracle of grace. For I have never lost it, and I have no recollection of ever feeling the stirrings of anger, jealousy, pride, self will, or bitterness, since the day God cleansed my heart from all sin and the Holy Ghost came in and filled me...

After this there was a watch night service appointed for Sunday night, and the Spirit showed me I was to go. After I came from church I was taken very sick, so that I could not sit up, and as the time for service drew near I began to feel that I might be mistaken about the Lord wanting me to go; so I prayed earnestly for Him to show me if He willed me to go. I found He did. It was suggested, "You are so sick." I said, "Lord, I will go if I die on the way."

Not being able to walk straight it was with great difficulty that I got out of the house into the street; but as I was passing the second house from mine all sickness left me, and in an instant I was as well as I ever was. The Lord had been working in that church; the altar had been crowded night after night with seekers. That night the preacher could not get the people to move. I think only two went forward, and the spiritual atmosphere was heavy as lead. The preacher started down the aisle, and it was said to him, "There is your help, in that pew." Not knowing who I was, as I was kneeling and he could not see my face, he said, "My sister, I want you to go forward and talk to those seekers." It was a great cross for me to do it; but I went. He said, "We will sing one verse, then Sister Fitzgerald will talk to us." Not thinking of one word to say it was so great a cross that I know I could have died easier than to speak. But the thought came, "I must meet all these at the
judgment," and though I could not think of one word to say, I said, "Here, Lord, are these lips; speak through them."

I told of an Episcopalian lady who some years before was in that church and became deeply convicted, but her husband opposed her coming again, saying she was as good as those who professed to be converted. A short time after she sickened and died. Just before she died she called for her little daughter, some two or three years old, to be placed upon the bed, her husband sitting beside her bed. She said, "You have stood between me and my soul's salvation. You said I was good enough. Now I want you to promise me that you will let my dear child go to church as God leads her, that she may be saved."

As I told this an elegantly dressed lady from the middle of the church arose and came to the altar. As she started out the people started from all parts of the church and came forward, and many were converted. Two days after, this lady came to see me; God had soundly converted her. She said, "I was deeply convicted, and wanted to go forward for prayer; but my husband was in Washington, and I thought he would be displeased when he came to find that I, an Episcopalian, had gone to a Methodist altar for prayers. But when you told that story I resolved he should not stand between me and God; that I would have my soul saved."

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21 -- ALDRED COOKMAN -- DECEMBER 31, 1857 -- JANUARY 1, 1858
From hdm0602 -- "The Life Of Alfred Cookman" by Henry B. Ridgaway

The revival spoken of began during the first winter (1857-8) of Mr. Cookman's ministry at Green Street. I extract a few entries from his pocket-diary as indicative of the progress of the work for January and February:

"January 1, 1858. -- The first day of a new year. Oh, that it may prove the best day of my life! Our watchnight was solemn and profitable. Delivered an address this afternoon at a Sabbath School anniversary.

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22 -- PHINEAS FRANKLIN BRESEE -- DECEMBER 31, 1863 -- JANUARY 1, 1864
From hdm0091 -- "Phineas F. Bresee, A Prince In Israel" by E. A. Girvin

In the autumn of 1862, Brother and Sister Bresee began their work in the pastorate of one of the two Methodist Episcopal churches in Des Moines... During his pastorate of two years, the church was rebuilt and arrangements made to compromise on favorable terms with the holder of the indebtedness, who offered to accept a sum equal in value to the property of the church.

Among the first services held in the new church was the Watch Night meeting. During those two years in Des Moines, the Lord had given Brother Bresee almost a constant tide of salvation--no very great outbreak at any one time--but a state of revival, which gradually strengthened the church, and put it in a comparatively strong condition in every way.
23 -- CHARLES WESLEY WINCHESTER -- DECEMBER 31, 1868 -- JANUARY 1, 1869
From hdm2045 -- "Reminiscences Of Fifty Years In Christian Service" by Charles Wesley Winchester

Full of doubt and uncertainty as to what duty was, I went at last to my pastor and poured my troubles into his ear. He advised me to try preaching and see how I would feel. "We are almost at the end of the year," he said. "I intend to hold a watch-night service. I shall preach and I want someone else to deliver a discourse. You have no license to preach; but that makes no difference. I will give notice that Professor Winchester will preach at eleven o'clock. That will draw in the students and hold them till the closing exercises at midnight, which are always very impressive." So I preached my first sermon at 11 o'clock p.m. December 31, 1868. I well remember the text and the sermon. I could very nearly repeat the latter now. Nearly all the students and teachers of the Seminary were present.

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24 -- WILLIAM TAYLOR -- DECEMBER 31, 1874 -- JANUARY 1, 1875
From hdm0896 -- "Story Of My Life, Part B (Chapters 22-48)" by William Taylor

"Secunderabad, Saturday, January 2, 1875

"Dear Brother Clark: The happiest of happy New Years, with 'grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord,' to my own dear brother in the faith! Your letter has been just handed me, and O how welcome it is! These ten days have indeed been delightful. Never has work for the Master been so blessed. Like you, I have had plenty of it, but strength and grace have been vouchsafed me. Secunderabad is a pleasant place, so far as climate is concerned. My quarters and the worshipping place are a little outside the town proper, in a very pleasant locality.

"Never have I had a deeper sense of the Father's love and care than since I arrived. The warmth of reception, the comfortable surroundings, etc., all combined with the amount of work on hand, which is my native element, fill my soul with gratitude. I board with a good, kind widow lady, Sister Summers, whose family comprises one little granddaughter. My surroundings are not perhaps just as comfortable and inviting as yours, but I am so happy and thankful.

"Last Sabbath was a delightful day. I led a prayer meeting, preached twice, and organized the Sunday school. We had twenty-seven children to organize with, and plenty of available teachers. I shall go to work on the newest and most approved American plan -- senior, intermediate, and primary. I shall have to fight to get the adults to join, but I intend to.

"The Lord is giving me power in my work. I have three preaching places besides Secunderabad (Chadarghat, Trimulgherry, and Bolarum), but they are of minor importance for the reason that they are within reach of the town, and the people come to our principal meetings
regularly. Yet they must be attended to. Thank God for a band of good, earnest workers, many of them sisters, who stand by me willing to do anything for the Lord!

"Instead of a magnificent equipage like yours I am the proud and happy owner of a 'bandy,' modest, but substantial. For an animal of the equine species my people have provided me with a pair of the bovine. My Jehu can't speak a word of English, and I have quite a time with him.

"Our 'Methodist Hall' is a comfortable but by no means an elegant one. Many precious souls have been born in it, however; and that beautifies any place. Last Wednesday evening we had a glorious time. It was the occasion of our sacrament service. The glory of the Lord did fill the house. It was a memorable hour in my history. For the first time I administered the holy communion, and for the first time I welcomed members -- my members -- into the fold. Our holiness meetings are very precious. We had a grand rally for the watch night of all our stations. We had three half-hour addresses by two of my local preachers and Captain Wodehouse, a Plymouth Brother. I brought up the rear, and God helped me wonderfully. I have reason to believe that great good was done. We had Europeans, Eurasians, Hindus, Mohammedans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Roman Catholics present. One of the latter was a woman who three weeks ago turned one of our sisters out of her house because she distributed tracts in it. She was deeply moved.

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25 -- SAMUEL ASHTON KEEN -- DECEMBER 31, 1874 -- JANUARY 1, 1875
From hdm0108 -- "Memorial Papers" by Mary P. Keen

Columbus, Ohio, January 1, 1875

Began the New Year in he concluding exercises of Town Street watch-night service. At five minutes past 12 o'clock A. M., I solemnly renewed my consecration to God. This day finds me with great peace and strong in faith. I rest in Jesus. This happy New Year finds me in the seventh year of my ministry, in the twentieth year of my conversion, my sixth year of perfect love, and my third year in my pastoral term at Wesley Chapel, Columbus, Ohio.

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26 -- AMANDA SMITH -- DECEMBER 31, 1879 -- JANUARY 1, 1880
From hdm0157 -- "Mrs Amanda Smith" an Autobiography

January 1st, 1880. The Lord's Word to me this morning is, "Lo, I am with you always." I leave for Cawnpore. Watch night at Dr. Thoburn's church at Calcutta. I dine with Brother Goodwin, and the Stones, of Ohio.

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27 -- CHARLES WESLEY WINCHESTER -- DECEMBER 31, 1885 -- JANUARY 1, 1886
I closed the old year with a watch meeting. I will stop here to record that I have held a watch meeting every year of all my pastorates, with only five exceptions. They were all seasons of great profit. I never had any difficulty in filling up the time. I have never seen the need of inserting a literary program, or of serving coffee and fried cakes, or of contriving any other way for killing time. There is no time in the whole year so valuable for impressing truth on the minds of our people as the last few hours and minutes. I would advise every pastor to hold a watch-night service every year, unless there are very special reasons for its omission. At that watch meeting at Batavia a young Irish Roman Catholic barber was converted. I think he came in, out of curiosity, to see what a watch meeting was. He joined the church. Some weeks later I noticed that the shop was closed. In a few days he came to see me. He said: "You have noticed that my shop was closed, I have been to Rochester to see my mother, who was sick. I stayed with her till she died. She made me promise that she should be buried from St. Mary's Catholic Church. As soon as she was laid out, I went to see the priest and told him of mother's death and of her request to be buried from the church. He told me that it would cost me ten dollars and that I would have to pay cash down. There was no other way to carry out my promise to mother; so I gave him ten dollars, though mother had rubbed out hundreds of dollars on the wash-board and given to him. But I made him give me a 'receipt'; and he pulled it out of his pocket and showed it to me.

Following that watch meeting I held about two weeks of special services for prayer and testimony. Wednesday, January 20, I preached to the unconverted and gave an invitation to come to the altar for prayer. Several persons sought the Lord that night. I kept on preaching every night till one week from the following Sunday, when I received about forty adults into the church on probation. I never had a revival start off so easily and progress so rapidly and with so little effort. I went on with the meetings till about the first of March with preaching every night.

28 -- ROSALIND AND JONATHAN GOFORTH -- DEC. 31, 1886 -- JANUARY 1, 1887

Space permits of but one story of that time in detail. Indeed it is a wonderful story of what may be termed BLIND GUIDANCE.

New Year's Day, 1887, was bitterly cold. Jonathan Goforth and I started for a walk through the Rosedale ravine just north of my home. On reaching Parliament Street, instead of turning northward to the ravine, I stopped short and said, "Jonathan, I feel strangely impressed that we should go south down to the slum district."

He looked at me amazed, and for several moments we stood debating, for he strongly objected, saying very truly that Parliament Street was the last place for a lovers' walk!

At last I said, "Did you ever feel so clearly led to do something that you just had to do it?"
To this he replied, "If that is how you feel, let us go south." (But it was a very silent walk!) For almost a mile and half we walked down Parliament. Then I led the way a block east. By this time I was getting pretty nervous.

Hesitating for a moment, I led on down Sackville Street for over a block, then stopped in front of a small cottage and said, "O Jonathan, don't look at me as if I had gone crazy! Let us knock at this door."

Jonathan, evidently getting anxious, exclaimed, "But why?"

"I don't know," I replied. Now I must say the man of this house was such a drunken fellow I had always avoided visiting his wife at times when he might be in. But at this time I knew of no reason whatever why I should call. We knocked.

The husband opened the door, and on seeing me cried out, with tears running down his face, "Oh, Miss Bell-Smith, God has sent you!"

We found the place like an ice house: no fuel, no fire, no food. The poor wife was lying on a miserable bed with but little over her and seemingly coughing her life away. In the corner of the room lay a dead baby, born a few hours before. Their sad story was quickly told. The man had gone to the city hall for help, but it was closed, it being New Year's Day. Returning to his wife with his last hope of help gone, he sank down by her bedside and joined her in crying to the Lord to send someone to them. At that very time the strange impelling had come to me.

The story would not be complete without the following: Forty years later my daughter Ruth (Mrs. D. I. Jeffrey of Indo-China) when on furlough addressed a meeting in the East End Mission Hall. A poor old crippled woman was helped in and seated at the door. She asked that Ruth be brought to her. Then tremblingly she unwrapped a tiny parcel and handed to Ruth a small gold coin worth two dollars and fifty cents, saying, "Give this to your mother and tell her I have never forgotten how she saved my life forty years ago." She had been keeping the coin for that purpose for years.

I hesitate and have hesitated long before writing the following, fearing lest some may misunderstand. But the story touches a chord that runs through most of my life as a struggling overcomer -- a climber!

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29 -- MARTIN WELLS KNAPP -- DECEMBER 31, 1888 -- JANUARY 1, 1889
From hdm0098 -- "Life Of Martin Wells Knapp" by Aaron Merritt Hills

"January 1, 1889. -- A new year full of cheer is now at hand. Watch-night service. Spirit of deep consecration; several seekers of perfect love. Am at rest, God is reconciled, the blood cleanses, the Spirit fills and keeps. May this be the best year of my life! Rheumatism is cured, but weak lungs have for a few days troubled me. I know that God can strengthen them, and will, if it be for His glory.
December 31, Sabbath

The old year ends well. May life so end! Too much worn to hold watch-night service.

1894, January 1, Monday

Spent a few hours at home, only twenty miles distant (from Marion). A glimpse at loved ones is good and refreshing. Found a providential significance, in this short visit, in a needful business appointment. At 2:30 P. M., held a covenant service. One young lady, Miss B., of the leading family of the Church here, told how, this A. M., she received the New-Year's gift of a clean heart, while reading "Faith Papers," chapter on "Witness of Faith."

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The last of November, 1903, we went to Beechburgh, Kentucky, a small hamlet in Fleming County, to hold a meeting. The house in which the services were held was a large frame structure with a high ceiling and very open, having two wood stoves which failed to keep the room warm. We had a large attendance and in the five weeks and a half we were there several were converted and sanctified. We had a watchnight service on the last day of the year in which several sought the Lord and were saved. It was at this place we met more of the adherents to the Mormon faith, but they were in disrepute because of some disgraceful things which had been done by some of their leaders a few months before.

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Another remembers an address he gave at the Clapton Congress Hall at a watch-night service, in 1908, in which he illustrated the passing of the year:

'What sort of a volume are you handing over to God? Twelve chapters, three hundred and sixty-five pages, twenty-four lines for each day.

'Soldier! How many duties neglected? How many crosses refused?

'Backslider! How terrible to hand God a book changed, smirched, stained!
'Sinner! Three hundred and sixty-five pages filled with transgression and sin.

It now wants fifteen minutes to a New Year! All the past can be pardoned. All can be put right before the clock strikes twelve.'

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33 -- B. H. LUCAS -- DECEMBER 31, 1939 -- JANUARY 1, 1940
From hdm0651 -- "My Life Story As A Mountain Boy And Preacher" by B. H. Lucas

...This closes up the year of 1939 with a watch night service, from 8:00 P.M., to 4:00 A.M. There was not a dull moment during the night and we had a good service.

January 1st, I was in bed and had a light bulb on a cord hanging on the head of my bed. My feet got cold, so I put the light bulb down to my feet and I went to sleep. When I woke up, I saw smoke going up toward the ceiling. I jumped up and the bed was on fire. A hole was burned in the sheet, blanket, and quilt, and the mattress was on fire. I was wide awake for the rest of the day.

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34 -- BMC GEN. BOARD -- DECEMBER 31, 1957 -- JANUARY 1, 1958
From hdm1653 -- "The Missionary Revivalist, February, 1958"

January 1, 1958, the General Board and the General Moderators and all but two of the District Moderators met at Duncan, Oklahoma, to counsel and make plans for the forwarding of the work of the Kingdom of God through the Bible Missionary Church. Rev. J. E. Cook and the wonderful people of the Duncan Bible Missionary Church furnished rooms and also gave us the use of their comfortable church building for the sessions. The Board Meeting was preceded by a great watch night service in the Duncan Church. Many preachers and laymen from far and near were present. The auditorium of the church was filled. Both our General Moderators spoke with unction and soul burden in the service. Best of all God, the Holy Ghost, came down in our midst. We praise God for His blessed seal of approval again as we began another year.

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35 -- WALTER BRYANT (Dot Maxey's Uncle) -- DECEMBER 31, 1966 -- JANUARY 1, 1967
From hdm0261 -- "Meditations From The Word, A Devotional" by Walter Bryant

Happy New Year 1967

How common is this greeting! We greet our friends and smile as we do so. We know there have been joys since New Year's 1966. Yet our life has been checkered with joys and sorrows; heart gladness and heartache. The pursuit of happiness is the right of every person. And we all want it. The quest of all. Where can it be found? In greater possessions, more conveniences, a better home, a nicer car, better clothes, and numberless things? Is it in things? I ask you frankly,
have acquiring these brought you greater happiness? Can I have happiness in 1967? If so, I believe
the Lord, the author of life, has the formula. He knows how to deal with the foes of happiness. Sin,
fear, sorrow, pain, disappointment, need. The hope and fear of all mankind are met in Him.
Believe me, it's true.

What's new? Why, this is New Years Day. The things and happenings of the past are not all
old. Ahead of us are 365 divisions laid out for us. Much of our memories will not be of 365 days,
but of events, and happenings, highlights and valleys of experiences. We reviewed the events of
last year, and many of them are real and startling in their nearness to our thinking. Weddings,
births, deaths, that car accident, that unhappy report, that happy report, and high spiritual
achievements, and low tides in our spirits. Yet so much has been routine, the monotony of day by
day walking and doing. Whether routine, spectacular, or startling, God's blessings have been new
every morning, they fail not. How real God is! God dead? Nonsense. The Lord is my portion, new
strength, new blessings, new assurance, new experience, new providences, new unfoldings of His
great and perfect Will and plan for me. Our daily sufficiency is in Him. That is enough for me.

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36 -- ERNEST CORYELL -- UNDATED
From hdm0081 -- "Also To The Greek" by Ernest Coryell

I decided to go home for Christmas eve and see the wife and kiddies and then return for
service the next night. I was able to get home by train but was unable to make connections to return
the next day. I asked a brother to take me in his car. He finally consented but with very bad grace.
All the way there he kept mentioning the wear on tires; and the bad roads, and every little
inconvenience seemed to add to his bad humor. In spite of his bad humor I was praying God that
He would give us a good service that night. It was to be the closing night of the meetings unless
there were a certain number of souls at the altar.

As the service began that night I felt the presence of the most High. I called on my chauffeur
to pray. He did so. It was a glorious service. God was there in mighty power. When the altar call
was given there were eleven seekers at the altar. I called my chauffeur to the platform to help pray
with the seekers. He was a professed Christian. He came but I noticed that his prayer was for
himself.

The meeting continued for another week and then we closed with five at the altar. I left for
home with an offering of twenty dollars and many gifts of clothing for the children.

On the way home I stopped over for a watch night service at a nearby church. I preached on
the text Romans 8:17: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so
be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

I preached for about ten minutes and then seemed to lose my grip. I floundered about in a
maze of words for nearly fifteen minutes, then suddenly I just quit trying to preach and gave the
altar call. There were thirteen souls who responded. We prayed and shouted the old year out and
new year in. Thank God for that way of celebrating.
When I reached home I found that one of the churches in North Dakota had sent a large box. The children were walking round and round it feasting their eyes on the contents of the miraculous box. How happy they were!

The next morning quite early five cars drove into our yard, each loaded with eatables. What richness! One dear family had brought a roast duck and the dinner that went with it, all prepared. Another had brought two bushels of potatoes which at that time were so expensive that each might have been worn as a watch charm. There was also an enormous five layer cake, covered with colored candies. It was a beautiful sight. How the children watched.

Mrs. Coryell was peeling potatoes. They were a real treat for we had been without them for so long. One of the tiny ones came running to me with her finger in her mouth.

"Daddy," she gasped, in ecstasy.

"What is it, Baby? Do you want some cake?" I asked.

Tears of disappointment came into her eyes, as she answered, "No, Daddy, 'tatoes."

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37 -- LUELLA MARSH FORD -- UNDATED
From hdm0502 -- "God's Ford On The Go" by Luella Marsh Ford

We invited my sister, her husband, and their two children to come to visit us over the New Year Holiday. They arrived the last day of December. I had spent several days preparing for the occasion. I baked a date nut loaf, banana bread, pies and other eatables.

New Year's Eve was our wedding anniversary. At the same time the Open Door Mission was to be open for a watch-night service. With unsaved loved ones and a husband who was not a Christian, what was I to do? I knew it was "God's Will" for me to go to the watch-night service. I had a decision to make. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Then the devil reminded me of the weather. It was so foggy you could "cut it." The people who live in South Tacoma know what I mean. What would you do? God has to be first.

I finally told the folks I had to go to the watch-night service. I told them if they were up when I got back, I would fix a lunch.

Shirley said, "Mother, I'll go with you."

So we started out into the foggy damp night. Cot the bus line and finally got to the Mission in South Tacoma. The devil let me know I wouldn't ever be able to talk to my sister about salvation after leaving her at home.
We left soon after the service closed a little after midnight and arrived home about 1 A.M. Everyone was still up and hungry. After a short time I had the table set and we had a nice lunch.

On New Year's Day while I was making the turkey gravy, my sister asked, "What do you mean, Lue, by being born again?"

Happy for the opportunity to explain salvation, I tried to answer her questions while I stirred the gravy.

"Lue," she added, "I've always been good so I'm ready to die. Now, you were always in trouble as a child. The Lord or someone needed to do something for you."

"No matter how good a person is he has to be born again in order to get to heaven," I continued, stirring the gravy. In fact, I think I spent more time on that gravy than on any gravy I ever made before or since. Talking to my sister at that moment was more important than getting the dinner on the table.

The devil is a liar and the author of lies. "... for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44)

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38 -- THOMAS HARRISON -- UNDATED

From hdm0412 -- "Revival Kindlings" by Martin Wells Knapp

Revival Watch-Night Services are profitable for the following reasons: People at that time naturally review the past, regret its failures, and profit by its victories. They anticipate the future and feel the need of divine help to meet it. They are forcibly reminded of the rapid flight of time. Also of past vows and of present obligations. More advancement can often be made in Revival work in one such night than in a week of ordinary meetings.

We began a precious Revival meeting last year with a watch-night service. Brother Kellogg had wisely planned for it, and it was owned of God. Evangelist Weber always utilizes this service, and great results have followed.

Thomas Harrison was converted as the bell of a watch-night service tolled out the old year and in the new. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

Conversion Of Rev. Thomas Harrison, Evangelist

The Bible speaks of some Christians whose experience is like a morning without a cloud. For some years of my early life my own experience in a temporal way was like a morning without a cloud. I had everything to make me happy, and all my plans were for enjoyment. One summer morning I said to myself, "Now I am going to have a better time than ever I had before in my life," and I formed my plans to spend ten weeks in Nova Scotia; and I bade farewell to father and mother and my brother, whom I loved better than life. And away I went, full of hope and joy; but soon
there came a time when I heard the thunders of God's wrath breaking over my head, and He brought me down to the very edge of Death's cold stream, where the loved one had gone over, and I saw him no more. A message came; I broke the seal. Written on the inside were only three words: "Freddy is dead." Then I bowed myself down before God's judgments and cried to God to save me, that I might meet him again, and that was all I asked. That was one means that God took to awaken my soul -- that was one line -- and the other was my godly mother's prayers. Every morning she would have us close the doors after my father had gone early to business, and take her Bible and pray such a prayer as only mothers ever pray for their children. Sometimes I would get up when she was done praying, and hurry away lest she should see my tears. I would steal away to my room, and try to find relief. I bore a heartaching on account of my brother's death, and a spirit distressed because of my mother's prayers for me, until one time she seemed to pray longer and more earnestly than I had ever heard her before, and besought God for the salvation of her son, and cried, "O, Lord, how long! how long! how long!" I thought I should die. I tried to study; I could not; I tried to work; I could not talk; I could not do anything. I cried, "Lord Jesus, this darkness is too terrible; I cannot hear it; let one ray of light from the Infinite come down to my poor soul and show me the way." It was watch-night. My mother had gone to the meeting. I got up and left my home; went into the street with an aching heart at 11:5. I went out into the darkness and the snowstorm, and prayed that while God's snows were floating down from the heavens, God might send down from the depths of infinite mercy some little hope to my poor spirit. In five minutes I came to the lamp-post close by where the watch-meeting was, and heard them singing the Covenant hymn, my mother's voice blending with the rest: and as I stood there, it seemed to me that the voice of God came to me as clearly as ever I heard the voice of my mother, saying to me, "Son, give me thine heart." I said to God: "Lord, excuse me just now; let me only go home. I can't get down here in the snow and cry for mercy; the snow will blind me, and the wind will pierce me through -- let me go home and get where it is warm, and I will give Thee my heart."

Then there came to me a voice, louder by far than the loudest blasts of that December night, "Now or I believe, Dr. Vernon, as much as I believe I am standing in this church tonight, that if I had crossed the line that was just before me at that moment, and resisted God's Spirit, He would never, never have come to me again, and I should have been lost. The Bible speaks of the voice of God as being still. It was not that way with me. It was like the thunders of eternity. "Now or never." I heard it as I would hear my mother's voice. I stood there and heard the old village clock strike six times. I knew full well that within the church the followers of Jesus were covenanted for holy living for the time to come. The clock was striking; I heard that voice saying in thunder-tones to my heart -- in tones that pierced my very soul -- "Before the tongue of that bell shall strike the last stroke, you must be saved or lost!" "My God," I cried, "can't I have a little time? Can't I be saved a moment later?" Again came that voice from the depths of the infinite, "Now or never!" and it seemed to me now that just about the tenth stroke of that bell, God Himself, from the depth of His unspeakable mercy, stretched forth His Almighty arm and interposed, and said, "I will hold back the stroke of the hell while for one minute you look to me." It seemed to me a very long time between those two strokes of that bell, and, thank God, before the eleventh stroke rang out on the air, the pent-up feelings of my heart broke forth in one strong cry, "Now!" and the two "Nows!" came together, God's Spirit answering to my own in an instant, and I found myself saved, reclaimed! It was all right in the twinkling of an eye. I met the conditions -- God blessed me. I came up to the requirements, God showered down the blessings. For four years His infinite mercy had been trying to kiss my poor soul; His loving arms reaching out to embrace me, but I would not
let Him. At last, all of a sudden, I extended my arms towards Him, and in a moment He kissed all my grief away. I did not think I was converted; I knew it. -- From” The Boy Preacher"

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39 -- UNDATED -- ANSWERED PRAYER ON NEW YEAR'S DAY
From hdm0424 -- "Purpose In Prayer" by Edward McKendree Bounds

A water famine was threatened in Hakodate, Japan. Miss Dickerson, of the Methodist Episcopal Girls' School, saw the water supply growing less daily and in one of the fall months appealed to the Board in New York for help. There was no money on hand, and nothing was done. Miss Dickerson inquired the cost of putting down an artesian well, but found the expense too great to be undertaken. On the evening of December 31st, when the water was almost exhausted, the teachers and the older pupils met to pray for water, though they had no idea how their prayer was to be answered. A couple of days later a letter was received in the New York office which ran something like this: "Philadelphia, January 1st. It is six o'clock in the morning of New Year's Day. All the other members of the family are asleep, but I was awakened with a strange impression that someone, somewhere, is in need of money which the Lord wants me to supply" Enclosed was a check for an amount which just covered the cost of the artesian well and the piping of the water into the school buildings.

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40 -- WESLEY CLOCK IN JOHN STREET CHURCH, NEW YORK
The First Methodist Church In America

From hdm1619 -- "Lost Chapters Recovered From The Early History Of American Methodism" by Joseph B. Wakeley

The reader will here see the picture of a timepiece; it is the venerable Wesley Clock. It was very early placed in the first church built in John Street, then in the second, and is now in the lecture-room of the third: As the church edifice was called "Wesley Chapel," so they called this first time-keeper Wesley Clock.

There are many clocks in Methodist churches in this country; almost every house of worship in cities has one; but there is no other Wesley Clock: this is the original. It is valuable on account of its age, and the associations that cluster around it.

It has ticked on while four generations have passed away. Many other things, as well as the people who worshipped in that house, are gone; but the old timepiece remains, still teaching lessons of wisdom. If it could speak, what tales it could tell of by-gone years that have transpired in its presence! If it could wield the pen of a ready writer, what a history it could record!

To many a preacher it has said by its hands, "You have preached long enough." In the midst of love-feasts, when the children of God were "sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," it has hinted, "It is time to conclude."
When conferences have been held in that chapel, the bishops have looked at its face and said, "It is time to commence," and requested the preachers to sing:

"And are we yet alive,  
And see each other's face?  
Glory and praise to Jesus give,  
For his redeeming grace."

To many a conference it has said, "It is time to adjourn." Ministers have looked at it, and sung, as they were separating:

"And let our bodies part,  
To different climes repair;  
Inseparably join'd in heart  
The friends of Jesus are."

Pointing with its silent finger it has proclaimed, at many a watch-night, "The year is gone!"

Many a covenant hymn has been sung in its presence. It has witnessed solemn vows. As its wheels have rolled on, the brethren have sung:

"Come, let us anew our journey pursue,  
Roll round with the year,  
And never stand Still till the Master appear."

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41 -- THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR -- BY BEVERLY CARRADINE  
From hdm0029 -- "A Bundle Of Arrows" by Beverly Carradine

There is something that strangely appeals to mind and heart in the ending of a day. As the sun sinks out of sight, and shadows gathers and men and animals alike forsake the fields and woods and hie them home, there is felt a pathetic power in the scene that the most gifted in language would find difficult to define and describe.

A page, if not a chapter, of life has been turned, never to be rewritten. Incidents, experiences, meetings, and partings have taken place that can never be repeated at all in most instances, or if gone over again, never as before.

Some years ago we sat on the brow of a mountain and saw the sun go down. For minutes it hung suspended over the horizon, a great scarlet globe, then slowly sank in an opaline west. That departed day has been recalled an hundred times to memory since then.
We never think of that sinking sun, or behold one like it, but a favorite song called "Goodbye, Sweet Day" comes to mind with the recollection of that evening, and all that appeals to mind and heart in the fact of a day forever gone.

If the termination of a day affects the spirit, how much more solemnly and profoundly should we be moved at the sight of the close or death of the year.

A day is but a chapter of life, while a year is a volume. With some reason we may expect a number of chapters, but with what right can we count on many volumes! There may be many of the former, but necessarily there can only be a few of the latter. One thousand and ninety-five chapters, after all, meant but three volumes of life. One-third of the human race never reach the tenth volume. Countless millions never complete the first.

So, as the year closes now in a few days, and some prepare to place the completed volume in their individual Library of Existence beside its earlier published companion books, and mark the number with the figures 10, 20, 30, 40 or 50, the thought may well and profitably fill the mind, "Shall I add yet another? or is this the last?"

What kind of a book have we made out of this present number? How does it compare with the others? Is it better, or is it worse in appearance and contents?

Some of the chapters we doubt not are much tear-stained. One or more has a black border all around, showing that Death has entered the home. One speaks very dejectedly of a certain sunset; another as rapturously about a sunrise. Several tell of the cooling of friendships, and the decay of a love that was thought to be eternal. One with many blots and the unmistakable mark of blistering tears, dwells upon a betrayal of trust. Surely there can be no more fascinating book to read than one of the volumes we have just mentioned. And all are invested with a certain sad interest when we come to the completion of the last page and sentence, and the finished work is placed on a shelf in the Library of the Universe. It is now a production to be referred to in many coming days, to be remembered at a dying hour, and to hear read aloud in full at the Judgment Day of Christ.

Tennyson recognizes the musing melancholy of this time in the words:

"I stood pensively,
As one who from a casement leans his head,
When midnight bells cease ringing suddenly,
And the old year is dead."

A part of the sadness which comes to the thoughtful mind over the close of the year, arises from the recollection of certain mistakes and failures made in this period of one's life.

It is perfectly natural for the pastor, evangelist, Christian worker, and every one indeed, who has been faithfully serving God, and achieving blessed results for heaven, to overlook their actually large success, and instead, to dwell with pain on the blunders and shortcomings which took place here and there in their labors and battles for righteousness and salvation.
How differently we would act, we say to ourselves if we could go over the same way again. And we doubt not that with the painful light and knowledge which experience brings, there would be with many, a wiser course and more successful life.

It may well be asked, that if such desires and resolutions, such amendments of judgment and conduct have been occasioned by these mortifying circumstances, then has not the soul secured a victory after all from the very jaws of defeat; while through the mistakes made, a strange, sad, yet most powerful education has been received, through the blessing and overruling power of God.

Some one has said that we all see life like one riding backward in a carriage. The objects on the road are beheld and recognized only after they are passed. In like manner the real crises of one's existence, the great opportunities, the times for certain speech and action, have in their momentous and weighty nature passed by before our minds and hearts seemed to take hold of the situation. Some of us, through lack of mental quickness, and by reason of disadvantages of many kinds, appear to be riding backward. We see the duty too late. We get sense on certain subjects after the hour the speech should have been delivered has gone. We see what we ought to have done to and for certain people, after they have departed from us and are out of our lives forever. Will not this fact count some in the Day of Judgment, that we had a back seat in the carriage?

Then, does not God know that we knew nothing to start on? and so had everything to learn?

In view of these facts it verily looks like men's errors of judgment, and shortage of the best performance of what they desired and tried to do, might secure for them a kindlier consideration and treatment than is the usual fashion of the world to accord to its inhabitants.

Nevertheless, with all this, the regret remains in the breast with very many who are not intellectually and spiritually dead, that they did not speak and do the best in everything, in the year that is just closing with them forever.

Again, there is a sorrow felt over the departing year in the contemplation of the losses that have befallen us in that time.

They are many, and run from mere disappointment in plan and labors to the going out from us and out of our lives of those whom we would gladly have bound to us with changeless ties of friendship, affection and association forever.

These last experiences refer not only to bereavement, the empty room, the gap in the home circle, and the vacant chair in our midst, to which it looks like we can never grow accustomed; but to the losing of those who were once warm friends and loved us, and then grew cold, fell away and became either indifferent or open enemies.

David felt this pang in connection with Ahithophel, and breathes out his sorrow over the matter in one of his Psalms. Samuel seemed to bear a lifetime affliction over the heart defection and life and character fall of Saul. The Lord had to ask him once, as if to arouse him from his grief, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him?"
It matters not how we lose our friends, whether they of their own choice leave us; or are stolen from us by untruthful lips; or go back to the world and into sin and forsake us; or whether through our faithfulness to Christ they give up our company and go no more with us. Yet the pain of the loss is felt, and memory abides, and the old love will not die.

So the closing of the year to the thoughtful mind, and to the soul possessed with any measure of sensibility is a time and experience not to be regarded lightly, but as a very precious, sacred and solemn thing. It is as if one had come down to a vessel's side which was about to sail away with his treasures and with friends and loved ones whom he would likely never see again.

An English poet filled with this thought and feeling, once wrote:

"I did so laugh and cry with you,
I've half a mind to die with you,
Old year, if you must die."

The Christian standing by the departing year can think and write and say nobler and better things than this, although the three lines are very natural, and somehow appeal to the heart.

We can say that the present volume is closed, but please God the next one shall be far better in every respect than its predecessors. The old year is going or gone, but the Saviour being our helper, the new year shall behold us enduring patiently suffering joyously, praying more, working harder, and living closer to Heaven than any other time we have ever known.

The ship is about to sail away, but God assisting and keeping us we will come to the heavenly country at last to which the vessel is going. As we have bidden farewell to friends and loved ones on this shore, and seen them fade away into eternity; even so one of these days, it may be this very New Year, they over there will greet us with waving hands and shining faces and happy hearts, as leaving this world of sorrow and death, we drop anchor and land in that country where the King loves us, and where many have longed for our coming, and from which happy, blissful, blessed shore we will go away no more forever.

O that beautiful land!
The far away home of the soul!
Where no storms ever beat
On the glittering strand,
While the years of eternity roll.

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THE END