

Welcome Address

(Address of Welcome by Pilgrim Bro. O. L. Sullivan, Nashville, Tenn. convention, Dec. 26 to 30, 1908.)

Dear Brethren: This is a most unexpected, though delightful pleasure. It was with astonishment that I saw, on procuring a program late last night, that this appreciated honor had fallen to my lot. My heart is full and running over with welcome, but just how to express it in words is very difficult. But you can know from the beginning that I am extending to you a most hearty welcome, however poorly my mouth may respond.

Now let us turn and read the 23rd Psalm, one of the most beautiful and instructive in the Bible: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a **table** before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The Lord's Table

Dear brethren, it is to this table that you are invited; it is this table to which you are welcome. Surely you can feel welcome at your Father's table. I remember after becoming grown and leaving my father's home, it occasionally became my pleasure to return and be seated at my father's table. Oh, how mother prepared and heaped the things most appreciated around the son's plate. God bless the dear old mother. When we thus remember these things and then we read: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." (God has prepared His table before us.) "I shall not want." "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Notice His care: "He restoreth my soul," and there need be no fear, for "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Then, too, dear brethren, remember this is not a temporary arrangement; this is not a transient affair; for this goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives. It is His purpose to **thus** get us acquainted with the Lord; He is now teaching us to know God, and to know Jesus Christ. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) And as a result of knowing God to love Him and trust Him. We cannot help but love and trust Him if we know Him. We must love and trust Him if we know Him. Dear brethren, if you do not love and trust Him, it is because you do not know Him, for God is good, and His mercy endureth forever. The only question is this: Will the Lord be able to complete this education, this teaching of us to know Him, and as a result of knowing

Him, to love and trust Him. With all in whom He does complete it, they are to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Thank God!

Again, to thus know God, and love and trust Him, is also to know, love and trust the brethren, for they have the same sweet spirit as the Lord; and you must love and trust the brethren if you know them. If you do not love and trust the brethren, it is because you do not know them. Now these are the two objects to be accomplished by this teaching of us now. First, to know God and as a result of knowing Him to love and trust Him; second, to know the brethren, and as a result of knowing them to love and trust them.

The Lord’s Cup

“My cup runneth over,” says the prophet. The Lord giveth liberally; He gives good measure. He says it is shaken down; it is running over; it is pressed together. God is not poor; He is abundantly able to supply all your needs. “My cup runneth over”—yes, it runneth over either with joy or sorrow, as the great Caretaker of our soul may see is best for us. But whatever it may be, joy or sorrow, it runneth over; it comes with a downpour; is intended to correct, to influence, to shape your character; it is intended to restore your soul—“He restoreth my soul”—that you may forever dwell in the house of the Lord. It is intended to make an impression on you; it is intended to shake you. And I will tell you, dear brethren, we need this. And when I look into your faces today and see what great progress you have made, and the joy and gladness that is filling your hearts, I tell you my own cup runneth over with gladness, indeed.

God restoreth your soul that you may forever dwell in the house of the Lord. Whether it is joy or sorrow with which your cup runneth over, know this: **it is a blessing**; rejoice in it. Brethren, remember the dear Lord is at the other side of this table, and is extending to you these running-over cups, and is watching to see how you appreciate them, how you rejoice in them. You have had your head anointed; should be fully appreciated, understanding (Psa. 32:9), “be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.”

The Lord’s Storehouse

Dear brethren and sisters, you are risen with Christ and are sitting with Him in the heavenlies, and the dear Lord is seated at the other side of the table and is presenting to you these overrunning cups, whatever they may be, either joy or sorrow, and He is noting the effect they are having on you. Now the Lord has opened His storehouse of provisions (holding up the Bible); He has spread the feast of things new and old. He has anointed our understanding; it is He who has brought us to this convention; it is He who has prepared a great blessing for every one of us at this time; He has furnished a servant to serve us; and you, dear brethren, are **welcome** to it. My hope is that we shall show our

good sense and our genuine honesty of faith and heart by feeding on it, and by staying with it to the very close, and not imagine we are showing Him courtesy, or demonstrating our own good sense, either by pursuing our own course and running away home or elsewhere. Let us consider to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. (Heb. 10:24, 25.) As this dark moment more and more envelops us, we will need more and more the encouragement and help that we can give to one another.

A very dear brother a short while ago spoke to me, saying that he thought it would be selfish for him to use his money for himself to attend this convention. My answer was, "Brother, let us have no opinion of our own when the Lord speaks, but let us go. Suppose you had a child for whom you had made a liberal provision, and it was continually finding other ways of using it and disregarding your wishes; would you think it had a very high regard for your will and your desire?" Just take it to yourself.

Feeling Welcome

I hardly know how to welcome you. But I throw my heart wide open to you. Would to God I could make you feel welcome. Yet it does not appear to me that it should be a very difficult matter for me to do so. You know you are welcome, but I want you to feel it; I want you to realize it. We are assured that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. This means there is no feeling of restraint; it means you feel welcome. Surely the Lord is here. Now, what shall we do? Let us get full of His blessed Spirit, and then we are full of the spirit of welcome or of freedom; we are perfectly at home, at ease, in His presence. Cannot you feel welcome at your own Father's table? O, yes, for then you are at your own table, then surely you are welcome, and you all know it. But I want you to feel it, to talk it, to sing it, and to help every other one to feel the same way. Let us say in our hearts, "The Lord is so good; it is His bounty; He loveth me." (John 17:23). We are merely in our Father's presence, and at His board. I am welcome.

Brethren, I speak today for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He who has made all things in heaven and earth, He who has redeemed us, and opened the eyes of our understanding. He who has led us hither for the very purpose of bestowing His blessing upon us. Now, should we not feel welcome to it? And should you not appropriate the blessings? All things are yours, dear brethren, for "Ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." Thank God! "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and you are the family of God. (Eph. 2:19.) But, dear brethren, the child differeth nothing from the servant, though he be lord of all, until the time appointed (Gal. 4:1, 2), but he is placed under tutors and governors. Your situation is nothing different yet from a servant, though you be lord of all; and though you are of the family of God. What a thought that is! We are here under the instruction of the great teacher, getting ready for the great future work at the

appointed time. You should not only feel that the Lord has brought you here, but that He has brought you here for a purpose. He has you here for the very purpose of getting you ready for the great future work at the appointed time. It is the Lord's earth, it is the Lord's bounty, you are welcome to it, dear brethren.

Unique Convention

This is a unique convention; we are here in the name of the Lord; we are here as members of His body; we are here as members of the Christ. Oh, you say, it is blasphemous! Well, they said the same of the Lord, that He blasphemed too, when He spoke of these things, then. We are here as branches of the vine; we are here as those who are in the world, yet not of the world; in the flesh, yet we are not walking after the flesh; we are here as pilgrims, and strangers, and foreigners; we are not here as those who are at home in the flesh; we are not here as those who are seeking entertainment and refreshment of a physical nature, but we are here seeking to know and do the will of the Lord. Do you doubt the statement just made? I tell you, dear brethren, if you knew as I do how many here today have given up positions carrying with them large salaries, and have given up home, and comfort, and perhaps some have given up privileges of forming earthly relationships of marriage, for the very purpose that they may actually engage with Jesus in the sacrifice, and in the dissemination of the Glad Tidings, you could not doubt it. We are not here either as paid delegates. Is not that wonderful? Just think what it means! Rather, we are here paying our own expenses, and traveling hundreds of miles in order to attend this convention. Neither are we here seeking preferment one of another. For we are Brethren. Thank God!

Why Present

We are here to rejoice. What more fitting thing than for us to meet here at this festive Christmas time, and rejoice in the Lord and His coming glory? What is more fitting than for us to take up the glad song begun by the angels and sing its prelude, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men."

We are here to feast, dear brethren. What is more appropriate than that the Lord's family should celebrate their family reunion and feast at His table at this Christmas time? Let us show our good sense and our honesty by doing so, and by not allowing any excuse to prevent us. Brethren, the Lord does not provide grudgingly or sparingly; neither does He desire that we should participate in that manner. Let us bring the tithes into the storehouse today and prove the Lord according to His Word, and see if He does not open the windows of heaven upon this occasion and pour out such a blessing that there shall not be room to receive it. (Mal. 3:10) I verily believe this is going to be done; I believe this is going to be one of the grandest occasions we have ever experienced. I can not

know why I do feel so, but I am sure it will be so. It will be just like the Lord to give us such a feast at this time.

Our present surroundings in this world are very inadequate for the necessities of the flesh, they being only a partial arrangement for the support of our physical well-being. God's bounty might just as well have supplied all the waste and prevented death entirely—and this will be done in the near future. But while this is true in regard to the flesh, these surroundings are admirably adapted for the very purpose for which they are intended, namely; the development of the New Creature. I want you to get that point. Under no other than these adverse conditions could the New Creature be chosen and developed. It is a mercy of God that has permitted this reign of sin, and given us this opportunity. Let us, then, rejoice even as the Apostle in 2 Cor. 12:10. Listen to his glad refrain, dear brethren, and see if you cannot, too, join in with him: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities." What does that mean? Why, that means bodily ailments, bodily weaknesses. "In reproaches." What does that mean? It means having somebody point the finger at you. "In necessities." What does that mean? It means not having the necessary things, such as food, clothing, etc. "In persecutions." What does that mean? That means more than pointing the finger at you; that means laying hands on you, and putting you in prison. "In distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong." Why could he rejoice in these things, and perhaps you and I cannot join in with him? O, dear brethren, he understood the matter! These things are mercies of God to grant you and me the privilege of developing this new nature and proving our worthiness of this high exaltation.

A failure from a financial or human standpoint may be much more of a blessing than a success would have been. Do you believe that? I met a sister the other day and she was telling what a hard time she was having. I said: Dear Sister, is not that the very thing you need? We should use the best judgment we can; should try to overcome it. But rest at that, even should conditions not improve, be assured the Lord is trying to teach us an important lesson. The question is, will we understand it; will we appreciate it; will we stop and ask for wisdom; will we get the benefit out of it, or will we ignore it and force the Lord, in mercy, to repeat this lesson over, and over, and over again? You will have to overcome on that particular point, and how is the Lord ever going to bring you over it? You ought to understand this, and if you would be patient, and cultivate wisdom, you would soon pass it; but it is a mercy of God that continually permits the trials, and we should be very careful not to take the edge off these important things. The Lord is trying to teach. Neither should we take the edge off of them for ourselves nor for one another. We want to help one another and this cannot be done by interfering unwisely with His providences surrounding us.

Now, let me repeat that again: A failure from a financial or a human standpoint may be much more of a blessing than a success would have been. It altogether depends on our

conditions whether the sweet or the bitter is best for us. Let us then be wise and rejoice that there is one that does know, and leave the entire matter with the Great Physician. We must learn to rejoice as did the Apostle, in 2 Cor. 12:10, in necessities, in persecution, etc., because they have a great value; they are worth something; they are the very things you need. You must accept all, both good and bad, as necessary food or medicine, ablutions or chastisements, for our spiritual well-being. I know it is hard to do this, but thank God, you can do it, and you are doing it. It does rejoice my heart today, more than I can tell, to look into your faces and see that you are doing these very things.

Welcome, All

In the name, then, of everything above and below the skies, I bid you welcome, dear brethren; in the name of the Lord Jehovah, in the name of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, whose Body we are, in the name of the Society, in the name of the dear brethren of Nashville Church, with whom it was my pleasure formerly to be united, and who, God knows, are dear to my heart, in the name of all the people of Nashville, I bid you a Big Hearty Welcome. Surely you know, as God's children, you are welcome to the Lord's bounty. Surely, as being still in the flesh, you are perfectly welcome to what you pay for; and the sentiment of my heart is that none of us expects anything that we do not pay for. The Lord has graciously furnished you with the means, no matter how it comes. He has made the provision for you, and as His stewards you are only using it as He has directed you.

Welcome Singly

Dear brethren, I am sure I speak the sentiment of every heart in my presence when I say, today, to Bro. Russell, that, in the name of our Master, a hearty welcome is extended to you—you who have stood for forty years amid the raging blast, without ever a deflection; you who as a mighty oak rears its head in sublime grandeur today, being bereft of every green leaf, having had every leaf of earthly desire swept away. Who has also had every earthly love and ambition torn away, limb by limb, until there remains nothing of earthly fortune, or fame, or name; youth gone, health gone, home gone, deserted by some of the nearest and dearest earthly friends and relatives, mind and body worn, and almost consumed on the altar of our God, and in the service of the dear brethren; life, manhood, fortune, name, all spread at our feet as a carpet upon which we have freely trodden, all poured out as water at our feet, and today the slender thread of life is being taxed to its utmost to hold aloft the beacon torch. God bless you, we welcome you, and soon you will hear the welcome applause, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of the Lord." But know, also, dear heart, we will stand by you and strengthen your hands until the sun goes down.

Dear Pilgrim brethren, our hearts extend a welcome to you also. We know of your anxieties, your hopes and your cares; and we also know of your blessings, which make the years pass by rapidly. The last six years of my own life have passed as a dream, and as so many days. It seems like yesterday since I entered this blessed service. Thank God for the blessed privilege we enjoy!

Dear Colporteur brethren, we throw wide the door of our hearts to you, and extend the warmest words of welcome in the name of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Co-laborers indeed are ye. God bless and continue you, for there could be no higher honor than this that is yours. In every place where I can today call to mind: Birmingham, Mobile, Pensacola, Marianna, and Nashville. God bless you, dear brethren. When I get to where you are and have you receive me with your loving greetings, I feel like I am at the very gateway of heaven itself.

Dear faithful co-laborers at the Bible House, God bless and keep you; you are welcome, thrice welcome.

Now, dear contributing brethren, let us welcome you also. Someone may say "Brother Sullivan, are you going to leave me out?" No, I would not leave any of you out. You dear brethren who are prevented from doing these other things, but are contributing your means, and prayers, and sympathies, God bless you. I want to liken you to the hospital corps who furnish the bandages, and coffee, and sandwiches, and encouragement to the faithful struggling army. We are all necessary, and we are all members of one another. You are all welcome, thrice welcome; God bless you all. I do not think now I should consume more of your time. In conclusion, let me ask you, dear brethren, **do you feel you are welcome?** I want all who do to stand and sing the long meter doxology on the first page of your song book, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow."