

(cont. from front)

January is a strategic month to ponder the mercies of God experienced over the previous year. Let us thank him that he graciously concealed many of the dangers that we passed through during the past year; in challenging days, God's care for us was more abundant than we have realized. As we move forward into this new year, there are troubles that await us. Though mercy has "hung a veil between us and the future," there are comforting certainties that we can know about what is ahead. We can rest assured that our sovereign God has planned the future and that he will care for his people. The knowledge of God's past mercies will encourage us to trust him as we make plans for this new year. Spurgeon said: "God all-sufficient will not fail those who trust him. When we come to the place for shouldering the burden, we shall reach the place for receiving the strength."

*Christian sympathy
is extended to the family of Miss Eugenia Wood, who
passed away on Wednesday, January 10, 2017.*

During the month of January, the LBA will be assisting a new church start in Cayce, SC by collecting the following items: Paper Towels, Toilet Paper, Coffee Cups, Napkins & Small Snack Plates. If you would like to help, please bring any of these items and place on the table beside the water fountain by Sunday, January 28th.

Crisis Center work day for Poplar Springs will be on January 18, 2018 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.



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Published by: Poplar Springs Baptist Church
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*Rooted in trust and hope in the Lord.
Branching out in ministry and service in our community.*
– Jeremiah 17:7-8

VOLUME LXIV

NUMBER 7

January 11, 2018

Charles Spurgeon was unaware, when he addressed a small group of Christians on December 31, 1891, and again on January 1, 1892, that he was four weeks away from death. For Spurgeon, ignorance concerning specific future events was a blessing. Spurgeon believed that if we knew our "best blessings" in advance that they "would lose their freshness and sweetness while we impatiently waited for them." He also believed that if we knew our trials ahead of time that we would fret and "miss the joy of our present blessings." He said: "Great mercy has hung up a veil between us and the future; and there let it hang."

On New Year's Eve, 1891, Spurgeon encouraged his hearers to join him in considering "the dangers we have escaped" in the previous year. He found wisdom in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*:

After Bunyan's Pilgrim had safely traversed the Valley of the Shadow of Death, the morning light dawned upon him, and sitting down, he looked back upon the terrible road, which he had passed. It had once seemed an awful thing to him that he had marched through the valley by night; but when he looked back, and saw the horrors he had escaped, he must have felt glad that darkness had concealed much of its peril when he was actually in the midst of it. Much the same has it been with us: thank God, now that we clearly see the perils, we have passed them in safety.

Spurgeon knew that some in his group had been "very near to the jaws of death" during the past year and that they had been unaware of how close they had been to various dangers. He said: "No one of us knows how near he has been to some great sin, or some false step. A single act might have changed the whole aspect of life to us; but from that act we have been preserved." The sovereignty of God was a comfort to Spurgeon: "The Lord saw what we could not see, and kept us where we could not have kept ourselves." (cont. on back)