

GOOD WORDS FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

“I will meditate in Thy precepts.”

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January 1.

"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart."

Ps. ix. 1.

Let us begin the year with this resolution, and strengthen ourselves for the unknown future, by giving thanks for the known mercies of the past. Let us praise the Lord for all that He is to us, for all that He has done for us, and for all that He has promised to do. The remembrance of these things may well increase our faith, and animate our hope; and though we cannot expect that the untrodden path before us will be all sunshine, we believe that He who has helped us hitherto will never leave us or forsake us, and that we "shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." Let us ask Him to teach us to praise Him. Men think it easy to do this, while perhaps they have never once thanked Him for His best gift! Let us thank Him that He permits us to praise Him. What are we that He who listens to the songs of angels should listen to our praise ? Blessed be God that we have an Advocate with the Father, through whom we may offer the sacrifice of praise continually. Let us, therefore, begin the year by saying, for past mercies, for present mercies, for promised mercies, "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart!"

"Forgive the song that falls so low

Beneath the gratitude I owe; It means

Thy praise, however poor—

An angel's song can do no more."

January 2.

"My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord."

—Ps. civ. 34.

It is indeed a sweet, and holy, and blessed exercise to meditate upon Him to whose love we owe all. Wherefore, then, do we not oftener engage in it ? Why do we engross our minds with trifles, and turn for enjoyment to things which "occupy but cannot satisfy, and in that they occupy they deceive ?" Let it be my resolution to meditate more; and let it be my prayer that God would teach me the secret of holy meditation. May He, by His Holy Spirit, open to me an entrance into His palace of heavenly truth, "that I may see the beauty of the Lord," and grow in knowledge of His ways, His works, and His Word. May I choose fit subjects for meditation, as I read God's Word and reflect on it. Reflect means to bend back—let me bend back on my own heart the lessons of sacred truth, that they may pierce and find entrance into my soul, and may become, through the Spirit's teaching, lessons of saving and sanctifying truth to me, so that I may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Here, in the fair gospel-field,
Wells of free salvation yield;
Streams of life, a plenteous store,
And my soul shall thirst no more."

January 3.

"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!
And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."

— John i. 35-37.

What a wonderful depth of meaning lies in those words uttered by the "voice crying in the wilderness !" They pointed out in " Jesus as He walked" —a man among men upon earth—Him who was the Divine Redeemer, Him of whom the whole ancient dispensation, with its system of sacrifices, was but the feeble type. This utterance of the Baptist is like the transition step between the old and the new dispensations, and shews the passing away of the one, which, however, was not lost, but fulfilled and perfected in the advent of the other. It tells us, in these latter days, a truth which men are slow to believe, namely, that Christ was sacrificed for us, as truly as the lamb was by God's command sacrificed for the sins of Israel. May we, like the two disciples, immediately on hearing this, follow Jesus! We know now, as they could not then know, how fully He afterwards fulfilled the part foreseen and foretold by John. May the thought of that sacrifice fill our hearts, and lead us to an unreserved devotion, such as St Paul calls us to, when he beseeches us, "by the mercies of God," to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service?

"Just as I am—Thy love, I own,

Has broken every barrier down;

Now to be Thine—yea, Thine alone—

O Lamb of God, I come!"

January 4.

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

— John xi. 26, 27.

This was indeed a noble confession of Martha's; but she did not know all that it implied. Her words at the grave shew that her faith had by no means risen to the point to which her Lord would have led her; for there was reproof in His reply to her, " Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" And does He not still speak to His people as He did to Martha, saying to them even now, "Believest thou this?" Believest thou what thou dost profess to believe? Thou sayest, "I believe in God the Father Almighty—I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord—I believe in the Holy Ghost— I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting;" but how does thy belief affect thee? Do these glorious truths move thy heart ? Are they thy life? He that "believeth in Me shall never die—believest thou this?" Alas ! how often do what we call our beliefs lie in our hearts, unquestioned indeed, but unfelt, like stones in the bottom of a deep well, till "Believest thou this?" is thrown as with a giant force among them, and the waters tremble to their inmost depths!

January 5.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall he added unto you."

—Matt. vi. 33.

How continually do we see the order of things inverted, and everything else sought, while the kingdom of God and His righteousness, if not wholly neglected, are at least sought last by men! Health, wealth, learning, worldly honours, how eagerly are they sought after first, while men scarcely seem to know what it was that Jesus commanded them to seek before any of these things. It ought to be a fixed point of belief with the Christian, that as the glory of God is the chief end of our being, so the kingdom of God and His righteousness ought to be the chief end of our desires, and the first object of our search. In the model which our Saviour gave for our prayers, He teaches us in what order to place the things of His kingdom—namely, first in our petitions; and when we pray thus in accordance with His will, we may look assuredly for the fulfilment of His promise, and believe that "all these things shall be added unto us"—all things that our Father knoweth we have need of—all that He sees to be for His glory and our own good.

"I pity those who seek no more

Than such a world can give;

Wretched they are, and blind, and poor,

And dying while they live.

Since sin has fill'd the earth with woe,

And creatures fade and die,

Lord, wean our hearts from things below,

And fix our hopes on high!"

January 6.

"There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." — Num. xxiv. 17.

"Lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."—Matt. ii. 9, 10.

"I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."—Rev. xxii. 16.

To the eye of Balaam the star was a dreadful object. He saw in it the Destroyer of his guilty race arising out of that nation whom he vainly wished to curse. How different from the "wise men of the east" in a later day ! To them it was the blessed guide of their feet; and following it in unquestioning faith, they came at last, not to a mighty earthly monarch's throne, but to the lowly stable and manger in Bethlehem "where the young child lay." Nor was their faith shaken by the sight of this "King of the Jews" in His humiliation —they "rejoiced with exceeding great joy"—they "fell down and worshipped Him, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts." Alas, how many stumble where these truly wise men stood fast! How many refuse to recognise the Babe of Bethlehem as the rightful King of their hearts ! May the Lord grant us grace to rejoice in Him as our King, and to hail as the Star of all our hopes this bright and morning Star!

"Cold on His cradle the dew-drops are shining,

Low lies His bed with the beasts of the stall;

Angels adore Him, in slumber reclining—

Maker, and Monarch, and Saviour of all! "

January 7.

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."—Ps. ciii. 3.

"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." —Isa. xxxiii. 24.

"Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?"—Matt. ix. 5.

The power that forgives is the only power that can heal. Those who seek to cure the diseases of the soul without making known the way of forgiveness, begin at the wrong end, and cannot succeed. The Lord alone, by His word of pardon, can effect the healing, and say with the voice of authority to the helpless and hopeless sinner, Arise, and walk. It was sin that introduced pain of body as well as grief of mind; and when sin is banished from God's creation, and the new earth appears wherein dwelleth righteousness, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." (Rev. xxi. 4.) Then "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick;" but not till then, for until that time the inhabitants of our fallen world shall not cease to be forced to confess, I am sinful! But if He healeth the soul's diseases now, and forgiveth all its iniquities, He will perfect the work in His own good time, and will not fail to bring His own forgiven ones to that happy, sinless, sorrowless land!

"Ah! sweet abode of peace and love,
Where pilgrims, free from toil, are blest;
Had I the pinions of a dove,
I 'd flee to thee, and be at rest.
But, hush, my soul, nor dare repine—
The time my God appoints is best;
While here to do His will be mine,
And His to fix my time of rest."