

J H Jowett-Daily Meditation 1

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MY DAILY MEDITATION for the Circling Year by John Henry Jowett JANUARY

JANUARY 1

THE UNKNOWN JOURNEY

"He went out not knowing whither he went"—Hebrews 11: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

ABRAM began his journey without any knowledge of his ultimate destination. He obeyed a noble impulse without any discernment of its consequences. He took "one step," and he did not "ask to see the distant scene." And that is faith, to do God's will here and now, quietly leaving the results to Him. Faith is not concerned with the entire chain; its devoted attention is fixed upon the immediate link. Faith is not knowledge of a moral process; it is fidelity in a moral act. Faith leaves something to the Lord; it obeys His immediate commandment and leaves to Him direction and destiny.

And so faith is accompanied by serenity. "He that believeth shall not make haste"—or, more literally, "shall not get into a fuss." He shall not get into a panic, neither fetching fears from his yesterdays nor from his to-morrows. Concerning his yesterdays faith says, "Thou hast beset me behind." Concerning his to-morrows faith says, "Thou hast beset me before." Concerning his to-day faith says, "Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me." That is enough, just to feel the pressure of the guiding hand.

JANUARY 2

THE LARGER OUTLOOK

Genesis 15:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

"AND He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven!" (Ge 15:5) The tent was changed for the sky! Abraham sat moodily in his tent: God brought him forth beneath the stars. And that is always the line of the Divine leading. He brings us forth out of our small imprisonments and He sets our feet in a large place. He desires for us height and breadth of view. For "as the heavens are high above the earth" so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways. He wishes us, I say, to exchange the tent for the sky, and to live and move in great, spacious thoughts of His purposes and will.

How is it with our love? Is it a thing of the tent or of the sky? Does it range over mighty spaces seeking benedictions for a multitude? Or does it dwell in selfish seclusion, imprisoned in merely selfish quest? How is it with our prayers? How big are they? Will a tent contain them, or do they move with the scope and greatness of the heavens? Do they just contain our own families, or is China in them, and India, and "the uttermost parts of the earth"? "Look now towards the heavens!" Such must be our outlook if we are the companions of God.

JANUARY 3

THE NEVER-FAILING SPRINGS

Genesis 17:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

"I WILL establish My covenant." The good promises of God are never revoked. They are like springs which know no shrinking in times of drought. Nay, in time of drought they reveal a richer fulness. The promises are confirmed in the hour of my need, and the

greater my need the greater is my bounty. And so it was that the Apostle Paul came to “rejoice in his infirmities,” for through his infirmities he discovered the riches of Divine grace. He brought a bigger pitcher to the fountain, and he always carried it away full. “As thy days so shall thy strength be.”

So I need never fear that the promise of yesterday will exhaust itself before to-morrow. God’s covenant goes with us like the ever-fresh waters of the wilderness. “They drank of that rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ.” Every fulfilment of God’s promise is the pledge of one to come.

God has no road without its springs. If His path stretches across the waste wilderness the “fountains shall break out in the desert,” and “the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.”

JANUARY 4

THE GOD OF THEIR SUCCEEDING RACE

Exodus 6:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

“I APPEARED unto Abraham... I will be to you a God.” The covenant made with the father was renewed to the children. The father’s death did not disannul the promise of the Lord. Death has no power in the realms of grace. His moth and his rust can never destroy the ministries of Divine love. Abraham died and was laid to rest, but the river of life flowed on, and the bounties of the Lord never failed. The village well quenches the thirst of many generations: and so is it through the generations with the wells of grace and salvation. The villagers have not to dig a new well when the patriarch dies: “the river of God is full of water.”

And thus I am privileged to share the spiritual resources of Abraham, and the still richer resources of the Apostle Paul. Nothing was given to him that is withheld from me. He is like a great mountaineer, and he has climbed to lofty heights; but I need not be dismayed. All the strength that was given to him, in which he reached those lofty places, is mine also. I may share his elevation and his triumph. “For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off.”

JANUARY 5

THE FLOWERS THAT NEVER FADE

1 Peter 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

“AN inheritance incorruptible.” I am writing these words in the Island of Arran. To-morrow I shall leave the land behind, but I shall take the landscape with me! It will be with me in the coming winter, and I shall gaze upon Goat Fell in the streets of New York. The land is a temporary possession, the landscape abides!

The praise of men often dies with the shout that proclaims it. Another idol appears and the feverish worship is transferred to him. The world’s garland begins to fade as soon as it is laid upon the brow. The morning after the coronation I possess a handful of withering leaves. But the garland of God’s praise acquires new grace and beauty with the years. It is never so fresh and flourishing as just when everything else is fading away. It is glorious in the hour of death! The soul goes, wearing her garland, into the presence of the gracious Lord who gave it.

We can begin even now to wear the flowers of Paradise. We can begin even now to furnish our minds with lovely thoughts and memories. We can have “the mind of Christ.”

JANUARY 6

“COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS”

Psalms 105:1-15

“COUNT your blessings!” Yes, but over what area shall I look for them? There is my personal life. Let me search in every corner. I have found forget-me-nots on many a rutty road. I have found wild-roses behind a barricade of nettles. Professor Miall has a lecture on “The Botany of a Railway Station.” He found something graceful and exquisite in the midst of its soot and grime. So I must look even in the dark patches of life, among my disappointments and defeats, and even there I shall find tokens of the Lord’s presence, some flowers of His planting.

And there is my share in the life of the nation. “Ye seed of Abraham His servant, ye children of Jacob His chosen.” There are hands that stretch out to me from past days, laden with bequests of privilege and freedom. Our feet “stand in a large place,” and the place was cleared by the fidelity and the courage of the men of old. I have countless blessings that were bought with blood. The red marks of sacrifice are over all my daily ways. Let me not take the inheritance and overlook the blood marks, and stride about as though it were nought but common ground. Mercies abound on every hand! “Count your blessings!”

JANUARY 7

A JOURNAL OF MERCIES

Nehemiah 9:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

THOU hast performed Thy words: for Thou art righteous." Frances Ridley Havergal kept a journal of mercies. She had a record book, and she crowded it with her remembrances of God's goodness. She was always on the look-out for tokens of the Lord's grace and bounty, and she found them everywhere. Everywhere she had communion with a covenant-keeping God. The Bible became to her more and more the history of her own life and experience. Promise after promise told the story of her own triumphs. She appropriated the goodness of God, and she set her own seal to the testimony that God is true.

Many a complaining life would be changed into music and song by a journal of mercies. Many a fear can be dispersed by a ready remembrance. Memory can be made the handmaid of hope. Yesterday's blessing can kindle the courage of to-day. That is the purposed ministry of "the days that have been." We are to harness the strength of their experiences to the tasks and burdens of to-day; and in the remembrance of God's providences we shall march through our difficulties with singing.

JANUARY 8

HE IS FAITHFUL!

1Kings 8:54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61.

"THERE hath not failed one word of all His good promise." Supposing one word had failed, how then? If one golden promise had turned out to be counterfeit, how then? If the ground had yielded anywhere we should have been fearful and suspicious at every part of the road. If the bell of God's fidelity had been broken anywhere the music would have been destroyed. But not one word has failed. The road has never given way in time of flood. Every bell of heaven is perfectly sound, and the music is full and glorious. "God is faithful, who also will do it."

"God is love," and "love never faileth." The lamp will not die out at the midnight. The fountain will not fail us in the wilderness. The consolations will not be wanting in the hour of our distresses. Love will have "all things ready." "He has promised, and shall He not do it?" All the powers of heaven are pledged to the fulfilment of the smallest word of grace. We can never be deserted! "God cannot deny Himself." Every word of His will unburden its treasure at the appointed hour, and I shall be rich with the strength of my God.

JANUARY 9

THE PERILS OF POSSESSIONS

Genesis 13:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

THERE is nothing more divisive than wealth. As families grow rich their members frequently become alienated. It is rarely, indeed, that love increases with the increase of riches. Luxurious possessions appear to be a forcing-bed in which the seeds of sleeping vices waken into strength. For one thing, selfishness is often quickened with success. Plenty, as well as penury, can "freeze the genial currents of the soul." And with selfishness comes a whole brood of mean and petty dispositions. Envy comes with it, and jealousy, and a morbid sensitiveness which readily leaps into strife.

So do our possessions multiply our temptations. So does the bright day "bring forth the adder." So do we need extra defences when "fortune smiles upon us." But our God can make us proof against "the fiery darts" of success. Abram remained unscathed in "the garish day." The Lord delivered him from "the destruction that wasteth at noonday." His wealth increased, but it was not allowed to force itself between his soul and God. In the midst of all his prosperity, he dwelt in "the secret place of the Most High," and he abode in "the shadow of the Almighty."

JANUARY 10

THE LUST OF THE EYE

Genesis 13:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

LOOK at Lot. He was a man of the world, sharp as a needle, having an eye to the main chance. He boasted to himself that he always "took in the whole situation." He said that what he did not know was not worth knowing. But such "knowing" men have always very imperfect sight. Lot saw "all the well-watered plain of Jordan," but he overlooked the city of Sodom and its exceedingly wicked and sinful people. And the thing he overlooked was the biggest thing in the outlook! It was to prove his undoing, and to bring his presumptuous selfishness to the ground.

Look at Abram. His spirit was cool and thoughtful, unheated by the feverish yearning after increased possessions. He had a “quiet eye,” the fruit of his faithful communion with God. He was more intent on peace than plenty. He preferred fraternal fellowship to selfish increase. And so he chose the unselfish way, and along that way he discovered the blessing of God. “The Lord is mindful of His own. He remembereth His children.” In the unselfish way we always enjoy the Divine companionship, and in that companionship we are endowed with inconceivable wealth.

JANUARY 11

SELF-MADE OR GOD-MADE

Matthew 6:26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

THINK of Lot and then think of a lily of the field! Think of the feverishness of the one and of the serenity of the other, or think of the ugly selfishness of the one, and of the graceful beauty of the other! Look upon avarice at its worst, upon a Shylock, and then gaze upon a lily of the field! How alarming is the contrast! The one is self-made, guided by vicious impulses; the other is the handiwork of God. The one is rooted in self-will; the other is rooted in the power of the Divine grace. God has nothing to do with the one; He has everything to do with the other. So one becomes “big” and ugly; the other grows in strength and beauty.

Now the wonder is this, that we, too, may be rooted in the power from which the lily draws its grace. We may draw into our souls the wealth of the Eternal, even the unsearchable riches of Christ. We may put on “the beauty of holiness.” We may become clothed in the graces of the Spirit. When we are in the field of the lilies we may appear unto the Lord as kindred flowers of His own garden.

“He that abideth in Me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit.” “Rooted in Him,” we shall “grow up in all things unto Him.”

JANUARY 12

TWO OPPOSITES

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”—1Jn 2:13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

O man can love two opposites any more than he can walk in contrary directions at the same time. No man can at once be mean and magnanimous, chivalrous and selfish. We cannot at the same moment dress appropriately for the arctic regions and the tropics. And we cannot wear the habits of the world and the garments of salvation. When we try to do it the result is a wretched and miserable compromise. I have seen a shopkeeper on the Sabbath day put up one shutter, out of presumed respect for the Holy Lord, and behind the shutter continue all the business of the world! That one shutter is typical of all the religion that is left when a man “loves the world” and delights in its prizes and crowns. His religion is a bit of idle ritual which is an offence unto God!

So I must make my choice. Shall I travel north or south? Which of the two opposites shall I love—God or the world? Whichever love I choose will drive out and quench the other. And thus if I choose the love of God it will destroy every worldly passion, and the river of my affections and desires will be like “the river of water of life, clear as crystal.”

JANUARY 13

THE MIRACLE IN A DRY PLACE (Ed: Do you feel spiritually "dry"?)

Psalms 107:33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

“HE turneth ... the dry ground into water-springs.” (Is 41:18KJV, cp Is 58:11KJV, Ps 23:3KJV) This is one of the miracles of grace. The good Lord makes a dry experience the fountain of blessing. I pass into an apparently waste place and I find riches of consolation. Even in “the valley of the shadow” I come upon “green pastures” and “still waters.” (Ps 23:2KJV) I find flowers in the ruts of the hardest roads if I am in “the way of God’s commandments.” (Ps 119:32KJV) God’s providence is the pioneer of every faithful pilgrim. His blessed feet have “gone before.” (Ge 33:12KJV)

**What I shall need is already foreseen,
and foresight with the Lord means
forethought and provision.**

Every hour gives the loyal disciples surprises of grace.

Let me therefore not fear when the path of duty turns into the wilderness. The wilderness is as habitable with God as the crowded city, and in His fellowship my bread and water are sure. The Lord has strange manna for the children of disappointment, and He makes water to “gush forth from the rock.” (Ps 78:20KJV, Ps 105:41KJV, Is 48:21KJV) Duty can lead me nowhere without Him, and His provision is abundant both in “the thirsty desert and the dewy mead.” (cp Ps 63:1KJV, Ps 143:6KJV) There will be a spring at

the foot of every hill, and I shall find “lilies of peace” in the lonely valley of humiliation.

JANUARY 14

FORGETTING GOD

Deuteronomy 8:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

"BEWARE ... lest when thou hast eaten and art full ... thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God." I was in a little cottage near Warwick. I said to the good man who lived in it, "Can you see the castle?" and he replied, "We can see it best in the winter when the leaves are off the trees. In the summer time it is apt to be hid!" The summer bounty hid the castle; the winter barrenness revealed it! And so it is in life. In the season of fulness we are prone to be blind to "the house of many mansions," and we forget the Master of the house, the Lord our God. Our material wealth hides our eternal treasure.

What, then, shall we do in the days of our prosperity, when all our trees are in full leaf? We must pray that material things may never become **opaque**, that they may be always **transparent**, so that through the seen we may behold the unseen (cp 2Co 4:18). This is a gift of the Spirit, and it may be ours. He will anoint our eyes with the eye-salve of grace, and everything will become to us a symbol of something better, so that even in the midst of material plenty our hearts will be with our treasure in heaven (Mt 6:21-note). Everything will be to us "as it were transparent glass."

JANUARY 15

THE MINISTRY OF PRAISE

Psalms 115:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

"THE Lord hath been mindful of us: He will bless us." (Ps 115:2) In that joyful assurance there is both retrospect and prospect. There is the trodden pathway of **Providence**, and there is the star of hope! The eyes are steadied and refreshed in sacred memories, and then they gaze into the future with serene and happy confidence. And so the **Ebenezer** of the soul (cp 1Sa 7:12) becomes both a thanksgiving and a re-consecration.

Now perhaps our hopes are thin because our praises are scanty. Perhaps our expectations are clouded because our memories are dim. There is nothing so quickens hope as a journey among the mercies of our yesterdays. The heart lays aside its fears amid the accumulated blessings of our God. Worries pass away like cloudlets in the warmth of a summer's morning. And the recollections of God's goodness always make summer even in the wintriest day.

Now I see why the New Testament is so urgent in the matter of praise. Without praise many other virtues and graces cannot be born. Without praise they have no breath of life. Praise quickens a radiant company of heavenly presences, and among them is the shining spirit of hope.

JANUARY 16

THE DISTINCTION OF BEING RECOGNIZED

John 10:1-18.

"THE Good Shepherd knows His sheep, and knows them by name. And that is what I am tempted to forget. I think of myself as one of an innumerable multitude, no one of whom receives personal attention. "My way is overlooked by my God." But here is the evangel—the Saviour would miss me, even me!

At a great orchestral rehearsal, which Sir Michael Costa was conducting, the man who played the piccolo stayed his fingers for a moment, thinking that his trifling contribution would never be missed. At once Sir Michael raised his hand, and said: "Stop! Where's the piccolo?" He missed the individual note. And my Lord needs the note of my life to make the music of His Kingdom, and if the note be absent He will miss it, and the glorious music will be broken and incomplete.

There is a common vice of self-conceit, but there is also a common vice of excessive self-depreciation. "My Lord can do nothing with me!" Yes, my Lord knows thee and needs thee! And by the power of His grace thou canst accomplish wonders!

JANUARY 17

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

"My sheep hear My voice!" —Jn 10:19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.

THIS is spiritual discernment. We may test our growth in grace by our expertness in detecting the voice of our Lord. It is the skill of

the saint to catch “the still small voice” (1Ki 19:12KJV) amid all the selfish clamours of the day, and amid the far more subtle callings of the heart. It needs a good ear to catch the voice of the Lord in our sorrows. I think it requires a better ear to discern the voice amid our joys! The twilight helps me to be serious; the noonday glare tends to make me heedless.

“And they follow Me!” Discernment is succeeded by obedience. That is the one condition of becoming a saint—to follow the immediate call of the Lord. And it is the one condition of becoming an expert listener. Every time I hear the voice, and follow, I sharpen my sense of hearing, and the next time the voice will sound more clear.

“And I give unto them eternal life.” Yes, life is found in the ways of a listening obedience. Every faculty and function will be vitalized when I follow the Lord of life and glory. “In Christ shall all be made alive.”

My Saviour, graciously give me the listening ear! Give me the obedient heart.

JANUARY 18

FALSE SHEPHERDS

Ezekiel 34:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

THIS word of the Lord puts before me the unlovely lineaments of the false shepherds.

They are self-seeking. They “feed themselves,” but they “feed not the flock.” They take up religion for what they can make out of it! It is a carnal ambition, not a holy service. It is used for getting, not for giving, for self-glorification and not for self-sacrifice. It is selfishness masquerading as holiness, the thief in the garb of the shepherd.

And, therefore, the false shepherds are devoid of sympathy. “The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick.” Selfishness always tends to benumbment. Humaneness is fostered by sacrifice. Our sympathetic chords are kept refined by chivalrous deeds. Drop the deeds and all our refinements begin to coarsen, and we make no response to our brother’s cries of need and pain.

And because there is no sympathy there is no quest. “My sheep wandered ... and none did seek after them.” How can we seek them if we have never missed them, if we have no sense that they are lost? Our Lord came in travail of soul to “seek that which was lost.” And I must share His travail if I would share in the search.

JANUARY 19

THE LOST SHEEP

Ezekiel 34:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

AND now, again, I am bidden to contemplate the gracious ministries of the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd searches the “far country” for His lost sheep. “I will bring them ... out of all places where they have been scattered.” He goes into the hard wilderness of cold indifference, and wasteful pride, and desolating sin, searching “high and low” for His foolish sheep. And no place is unvisited by the Great Seeker! Every perilous ravine, where a sheep can be lost, knows the footprints of the Shepherd. And He knows my far-country, and He is seeking me!

And the Good Shepherd brings His wandering sheep back home. “I will bring them ... to their own land.” We return from the land of pride to the home of lowliness, from hard indifference to gracious sympathy, from the barrenness of sin to the beauty of holiness. We come back to God’s beautiful “lily-land” of eternal light and peace.

And what nutriment the Good Shepherd provides for the home-coming sheep! “I will feed them in a good pasture.” Our wasted powers shall be renewed and strengthened by the fattening diet of grace. Love shall be both host and meat! “He will satisfy thy mouth with good things.”

JANUARY 20

THE PASSING OF THE BEAST

Ezekiel 34:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

WHEN the Good Shepherd has charge of His flock “the wild beasts will cease out of the land.” All beastly passions shall be destroyed. The fair gardens of our souls shall no longer be ravaged by sleek pride, or fierce appetite, or ravenous lust. “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.”

And the forces of nature shall be in friendly co-operation. "I will cause the shower to come down in his season." We are to have mystic allies in sky and field. Nature sides with the man who sides with God. Our very garden becomes our helpmeet when we are cultivating the fruits of the Spirit. The heavens assume a friendly aspect when we are "marching to beautiful Zion." But when we are against the Lord all these forces appear to be hostile. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

And we are to have a joyful assurance of the companionship of our God. "This shall they know, that I, the Lord their God, am with them." And in that precious assurance every other treasure is found! Only be sure of that, and we shall walk about as kings and queens!

JANUARY 21

THE VALUE OF ONE SOUL

Matthew 18:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

WHAT an infinite value the Lord attaches to one soul! "And one of them be gone astray!" I thought He might never have missed the one! And yet the Eastern shepherd says that out of his great flock he can miss the individual face. A face is missing, as though a child were absent from the family circle. When a soul is wandering in the far country there is an awful gap in the Father's house! Is thy place empty? Is mine?

And mark the pangs of the Shepherd's quest. He "goeth into the mountain and seeketh!" The Eastern shepherd goes out in tempest, and in rocky ravine, or in thorny scrub that tears the hands and feet, he seeks and finds his sheep. And my Lord sought me, in stony and thorny places, in the darkness of Gethsemane, and in the awful desolations of The Hill.

And the Shepherd found His sheep, and He returns across the hills singing the song of the triumph of grace—

"And up from the mountains, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
A cry arose to the gates of heaven,
'Rejoice! I have found My sheep!'
And the angels echo around the throne,
'Rejoice! for the Lord brings back His own!'"

JANUARY 22

MY OWN SHEPHERD

Psalms 23:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

HOW shall we touch this lovely psalm and not bruise it? It is exquisite as "a violet by a mossy stone!" Exposition is almost an impertinence, its grace is so simple and winsome.

There is the ministry of rest "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." The Good Shepherd knows when my spirit needs relaxation. He will not have me always "on the stretch." The bow of the best violin sometimes requires to have its strings "let down." And so my Lord gives me rest. (See concept of "Rest" in Scripture)

And there is the discipline of change. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." Those strange roads in life, unknown roads, by which I pass into changed circumstances and surroundings! But the discipline of the change (cp He 12:11-note; Ps 119:67-note, Ps 119:71-note) is only to bring me into new pastures, that I may gain fresh nutriment for my soul. "Because they have no changes they fear not God."

And there is "the valley of the shadow," cold and bare! What matter? He is there! "I will fear no evil." What if I see "no pastures green"? "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me!" The Lord, who is leading, will see after my food. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." I have a quiet feast while my foes are looking on!

JANUARY 23

THE GIVER'S HAND

Genesis 4:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

CAIN and Abel both brought an offering unto the Lord, but one was accepted and the other rejected. It is the giver who determines the worth or the worthlessness of the gift. God looks not at the gift, but at the hand that brings it. "Your hands are full of blood!" "Your hands are unclean!" The Lord demands "clean hands." He will not have our compliments if there is defilement behind them.

Our courtesies are rejected if iniquity attends them. The shining gloss on the linen is an offence if the dirt looks through! Who cares for food if presented by unclean hands? "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord!"

Every gift is welcome to the Lord if offered with clean hands. A mite, or a cup of cold water, or our daily labour, or the first-fruits of garden or field—all receive the blessing of our God if the hands that bring them are free from defilement. So is it with everything we offer to the Lord. A song of praise makes sweet music in the hearing of our God if it come from pure lips! Purity, as Thomas à Kempis says, gives the wings which carry everything into the Father's presence.

JANUARY 24

THE VOICE OF THE DEAD

Hebrews 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

WITH what voice shall we speak when we are dead? What will men hear when they turn their thoughts toward us? What part of us will remain alive, singing or jarring in men's remembrance? It is the biggest part of us that retains its voice. In some it is wealth, in others it is goodness; some go on speaking in their cruelty, others in their gentleness. Cain still speaks in his jealous passion. Abel speaks in his faith. Dorcas speaks in her "good works and alms-deeds which she did"; Judas Iscariot speaks in his betrayal. Yes, something goes on speaking. What shall it be?

But these biggest things not only continue to speak in the ears of memory, they persist as actual forces in the common life of men. Our faith is not buried with our bones, nor is our avarice or pride. Our characters do not die when our hearts cease to beat. "The evil that men do lives after them," and so does the good. But deeper than our deeds, our dominant dispositions persist and mingle as friends or enemies in the lives of others. By them we, being dead, still speak, and we speak in subtle forces which aid or hinder other pilgrims who are fighting their way to God and heaven.

JANUARY 25

FIRST, MY BROTHER!

Matthew 5:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

FIRST be reconciled to thy brother." We are to put first things first. When we bring a gift unto the Lord He looks at the hand that brings it. If the hand is defiled the gift is rejected. "Wash you, make you clean." "First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

All this tells us why some resplendent gifts are rejected, and why some commonplace gifts are received amid heavenly song. This is why the widow's mite goes shining through the years. The hand that offered it was hallowed and purified with sacrifice. Shall we say that in that palm there was something akin to the pierced hands of the Lord? The mite had intimate associations with the Cross.

And it also tells me why so much of our public worship is offensive to our Lord. We come to the church from a broken friendship. Some holy thing has been broken on the way. Someone's estate has been invaded, and his treasure spoiled. Someone has been wronged, and God will not touch our gift. "Leave there thy gift; first be reconciled to thy brother."

JANUARY 26

THE FIRE OF ENVY

"Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work!"—Jas 3:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

IN Milton's "Comus" we read of a certain potion which has the power to pervert all the senses of everyone who drinks it. Nothing is apprehended truly. Sight and hearing and taste are all disordered, and the victim is all unconscious of the confusion. The deadly draught is the minister of deceptive chaos.

And envy is like that potion when it is drunk by the spirit. It perverts every moral and spiritual sense. The envious is more fatally stricken than the blind. He gazes upon untruth and thinks it true. He looks upon confusion and thinks it order. Envy is colour-blind. It is like jealousy, of which it is a blood-relation. It never sees anything in its natural hues. It misinterprets everything.

No one can quench the unholy fire of envy but the mighty God Himself. It is like a prairie fire: once kindled it is beyond our power to stamp it out. But God's coolness is more than a match for all our feverish heat. His quenchings are transformations. He converts the perverted and changes envy into goodwill. The bitter pool is made sweet. For confusion He gives order, for ashes He gives beauty, and in the face of an old enemy we see the countenance of a friend.

JANUARY 27

THE CONFESSION OF SIN

"I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." Ps 51:3

—Psalm 51:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

SIN that is unconfessed shuts out the energies of grace. Confession makes the soul receptive of the bountiful waters of life. We open the door to God as soon as we name our sin. Guilt that is penitently confessed is already in the "consuming fire" of God's love. When I "acknowledge my sin" I begin to enter into the knowledge of "pardon, joy, and peace." But if I hide my sin I also hide myself from "the unsearchable riches of Christ." "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I must then make confession of sin in my daily exercises in the presence of the Lord. I am taking the way to recovered victory when I tell the Lord the story of my defeat. Satan strengthens his awful chains when he can induce me to keep silence concerning my sin. All his plans are thrown into confusion as soon as I "pour out my soul before the Lord." When I fall let me not add to my guilt the further sin of secrecy. Unconfessed sin breeds in its lurking-place and multiplies its hateful offspring. The soul that makes confession is washed through and through, and the seeds of iniquity are driven out of my soul.

JANUARY 28

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANGER

Ephesians 4:25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

"LET all anger be put away from you." And yet only a moment ago the Apostle had written the words, "Be ye angry and sin not." My power of anger is not to be destroyed, it is to be transformed and purified. Anger can be like an unclean bonfire; it can also be like "a sea of glass mingled with fire." There can be more smoke than light in it, more selfish passion than holy purpose. The fuel that feeds it may be envy, and jealousy, and spite, and not a big desire for the good of men and the glory of God. Worldly anger "is set on fire of hell"; holy anger borrows flame from the altar-fires of God.

Our anger reveals our character. What is the quality of our anger? What kindles it? Is it incited by our own wrongs or by the wrongs of another? Is it set on fire by self-indulgence or by a noble sympathy? Here is a sentence which describes the anger of the Apostle Paul: "Who is made to stumble and I burn not?" Paul's holy anger was made to burn by oppression, by the cruelty inflicted upon his fellow-men. His fire had nothing unclean in it; it was pure as the flame of oxygen.

This is the anger we must cherish. We cannot "work ourselves up" into it. We must seek to be "baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

JANUARY 29

NOBLE REVENGE

"I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy."—Psalm 7:4.

THAT is the noblest revenge, and in those moments David had intimate knowledge of the spirit of his Lord. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him!"

Evil for good is devil-like. To receive a favour and to return a blow! To obtain the gift of language, and then to use one's speech to curse the giver! To use a sacred sword is unholy warfare! All this is devil-like.

Evil for evil is beast-like. Yes, the dog bites back when it is bitten. The dog returns snarl for snarl, venom for venom. And if, when I have been injured, I "pay a man back in his own coin," if I "give him as good as he gave," I am living on the plane of the beast.

Good for good is man-like. When I requite a man's kindness by kindness! When I send presents to one who loads me with benefits! This is a true and manly thing to do, and lifts us far above the beast.

Good for evil is God-like. Yes, that lifts me into "the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Then I have "the mind of Christ." Then do I unto others as my Saviour has done unto me.

JANUARY 30

IRRESISTIBLE ARTILLERY

"When I cry unto Thee, then shall mine enemies turn back."—Ps 56:9

UT it must be a real “cry”! It must not be an idle recitation which sheds no blood. It must be a cry like the cry of the drowning, a cry which cleaves the air like a bullet. Said a man to me some while ago, “Assault the heavens with cries for me!” That is the cry which takes the kingdom by storm.

When such a cry rends the heavens, “my enemies turn back.” A secret and irresistible artillery begins to play upon them, and their strength fails. Yes, believing prayer calls these invisible allies into the field. “The mountains are full of horses and chariots of fire round about!” And the enemy flies!

“This I know.” The psalmist is building upon experience. The miracle has happened a hundred times. Many a morning has he seen the enemy vaingloriously tramping the field, and he has cried unto the Lord, and before nightfall there has been a perfect rout. Blessed is the man who has had such heartening dealings with the Lord that he can now face a hostile host in unclouded faith and assurance!

JANUARY 31

UNDER HIS WINGS

“In the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge.”— Psalm 57:1

COULD anything be more tenderly gracious than this figure of hiding under the shadow of God’s wings? It speaks of bosom-warmth, and bosom-shelter, and bosom-rest. “Let me to Thy bosom fly!”

And what strong wings they are! Under those wings I am secure even from the lions. My animal passions shall not hurt me when I am “hiding in God.” The fiercest onslaughts of the devil are powerless to break those mighty wings. The tenderest little chick, “one of these little ones,” nestling behind this soft and gentle shelter, shall be perfectly secure; “none of its bones shall be broken.”

I do not wonder that this sheltering psalmist begins to sing! “I will sing and give praise!” I have often listened to the sheltering chicks, hiding behind the mother’s wings, and I have heard that quaint, comfortable, contented sound for which our language has no name. It is a sound of incipient song, the musical murmur of satisfaction. “I will sing unto Thee ... for Thy mercy is great.”