

JANUARY 1

JANUARY

Strengthened by the Spirit

... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being...

EPHESIANS 3:16

O may I be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith. O may I grow in grace and be filled with all the fulness of God. Amen. Amen. Keep me humble, circumspect, watchful. I humbly hope to endeavour. I scarcely dare resolve, so often have I been foiled to read Scripture more seriously (evening and a little meditation morning). Think much of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Evil Spirit, of Heaven and Hell, Angels etc. To cultivate humility, love, meekness. Prayer less distraction and more serious and earlier evening, Malachi 2. Truth, peace, joy, self-denial and spiritual-mindedness, vanity, candour, kindness, evil-speaking, care and envy and anger and revenge and vanity, diligence, improving time, and relaxation, doing all to the Glory of God. Love, desire, gratitude, trust, veneration, humiliation. Alas! How little the right feelings about flattery and vanity. Let me strive to increase my sense of the evil of sin. Here my great defect as indeed the general one. O may I strive to improve here, see Scott on Repentance. I was much struck today with the text, God has chosen the foolish things of the world, and with the argument then afforded for Particular Redemption though not for Irresistible Grace. O God and Saviour, bless and sanctify me and enable me to be an active and thriving Believer, doing all to the Glory of God. Last year has been marked with mercies to me. Barbara bringing forth her child who is well, against probability. Alas! I dare not say I have gained ground. I humbly confess my sins before You O God. I humbly devote myself to God in Christ and beseech Him by His Spirit to bless me and renew me and enable me to live to his Glory.

JANUARY 2

In what pleasant places our
lines have fallen

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

PROVERBS 19:21

I begin to be ashamed when I call to mind on what day I am writing the day which, combined with the succeeding one, the 1st of January, I consider, except perhaps my birthday, as the most important of the whole year. For a long period I used to receive the Sacrament on New Year's Day. And the heart must be hard and cold, which that sacred ordinance in such a relation, would not soften and warm into religious sensibility and tenderness. I was naturally led into looking backwards to the past days of my life, and forward to the future; led to consider in what pleasant places my lines were fallen, how goodly was my heritage, that the bounds of my life should be fixed in that little spot, in which, of the whole earth, there has been the greatest measure of temporal comforts, and of spiritual privileges. That it should be also in the eighteenth century, for where should I have been, a small, weakly man, had I been born either among our painted or skin-clothed ancestors, or in almost any other before or after it? As they would have begun by exposing me, there need be no more inquiry as to the sequel of the piece. Next take my station in life, neither so high as naturally to intoxicate me, nor so low as to excite to envy or degradation. Take then the other particulars of my condition, both personal and circumstantial. But I need go no farther, the retrospect and prospect afford abundant matter for gratitude and humiliation, (I am sure I find the latter most powerfully called forth in my heart by my own survey).

H e h e a l s t h e b r o k e n - h e a r t e d

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

LUKE 4:18

It is no idle speculation to remark, that the visible constitution of things in the world around us, falls in with the representations given from Scripture of the dreadful consequences of vice, nay even of what is commonly termed inconsiderateness and imprudence. If such then be indeed our sad condition, what is to be done? Is there no hope? Nothing left for us, 'but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries?' Blessed be God! we are not shut up irrecoverably in this sad condition: 'Turn to the strong hold, you prisoners of hope;' hear One who proclaims His designation, 'to heal the broken-hearted, to preach liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind.' They who have formed a true notion of their lost and helpless state, will most justly estimate the value of such a deliverance. This is therefore no metaphysical speculation, but a practical matter: Slight and superficial conceptions of our state of natural degradation, and of our insufficiency to recover from it of ourselves, fall in too well with our natural inconsiderateness, and produce that fatal insensibility to the divine warning to 'flee from the wrath to come,' which we cannot. Having no due sense of the malignity of our disease, and of its dreadful issue, we do not set ourselves to work in earnest to obtain the remedy: for it must ever be carefully remembered, that this deliverance is not forced on us, but offered to us; we are furnished indeed with every help, and are always to bear in mind, that we are unable of ourselves to will or to do rightly; but we are plainly admonished to 'work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.' Watchful, for we are encompassed with dangers; 'putting on the whole armour of God,' for 'we are surrounded with enemies.'

JANUARY 4

Lord have mercy

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us ...

HEBREWS 12:1

Let me aim at a radical reform. Vain tampering does but nurture the disease. Lord have mercy upon me. From attempting too much by rules, I have of late neglected them altogether. Let me now note down a few for self-examination, which may assist me in watching over my ways. These to be looked over daily if convenient. I mean to make my health an object of great attention that if it may please God, I may yet recover strength for His service. Nothing is small when done from the right motive. Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we should do all to the Glory of God. God knows the heart. His promises and invitation in Christ Jesus are held forth to all. I see my misery, I see my guilt (O that I felt it more,) I humbly resolve to forsake my evil ways, and I am sure I know that I can only do it through His sustaining Grace. By His power even I may be recovered. Let me strive to enter in at the straight Gate. Let me now in good earnest turn to God with my whole heart, laying aside every weight and the sin that does so easily beset me. O God help me for Christ's sake. I will review my life and daily conversation by God's help and endeavour to form a plan according to the advice of wise and experienced Christians.

JANUARY 5

JANUARY

A conscience void of offence

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

ACTS 24:16

I ought to consider how I can best testify my friendship: for friendship let there be between us; never can you have a friend more warmly attached to you or more interested in your well-doing and happiness than myself. But if we are to be friends, you must allow me the privilege of a friend, a privilege by far the most valuable of all its excellencies. But if I am to exercise this best prerogative, this most sacred and indispensable duty of friendship, it will be necessary for you to prepare your mind and temper for receiving it properly, and for deriving from it all the benefits it is capable of imparting. Shall I be honest, and I must be so or be silent; were I otherwise, the very sheet which I am writing would rise up in judgment against me at the last day; if then, I am frank and honest, I must declare to you, that it is on this quarter that it will be necessary for you to guard yourself with the utmost watchfulness, and, still more, to prepare yourself with conscientious care. This is what St. Paul terms 'exercising oneself to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man': what the Book of Proverbs styles, 'keeping the heart with all diligence': for unless we have accustomed ourselves to self-suspicion, if I may use such a phrase, we never benefit as we might from the friendly reproofs of a real friend. We may receive his remarks with civility, and even give him credit for his kind intentions, but we shall be almost sure to let it appear to any acute observer at least, that we rather tolerate his frankness out of principle, or put up with it in consideration of the friendly motives by which it has been prompted, than that we listen to it with a sincere desire of profiting from it, still less that we welcome it as one of the most valuable services in design, even when not in fact, that could be rendered to us.

JANUARY 6

Running the race set before us

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

I CORINTHIANS 9:24

Enable us, we pray, on this day especially, to be more diligent in running the race that is set before us, that we may press forward with increasing earnestness, may grow in grace, and have more and more our conversation and our treasure in Heaven. May we thankfully detach ourselves from all worldly cares, business and occupations, and endeavour to set our affections in a peculiar degree on things above, and to strengthen our hopes of immortality. May we be sensible of the comparative vanity of all human enjoyments, and may we pursue that good which is substantial and everlasting. And may we this day be filled with the Spirit of the God of love. May all angry passions and evil desires be rooted out of us, and may we be more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and have in some degree those dispositions and that grace, which shall be perfected in glory. May we this day read Your holy Word with seriousness and self-application. May we pray to You both in public and private without wandering thoughts. Even in our seasons of recreation may there be some savour of heavenly things. Accompany us to Your house of prayer this day, and enable us, we pray, to engage in those sacred offices without weariness or distraction, with a serious desire of pleasing You, and of enjoying the light of Your countenance. May we listen to Your preached Word with humility, remembering that whoever plants or waters, it is You only that gives the increase. And let not the Evil Spirit take away the good seed from out of our hearts, or draw our minds from the serious reflections, which may have entered into them.

JANUARY 7

JANUARY

Praying for spiritual direction

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

LUKE 14:28

O how little have I done for God this year. How much my time frittered away with little use. How much should I strive to be useful. How earnestly pray for spiritual direction, ability and success. How little am I duly grateful for the multiplied mercies I enjoy. Let me be thankful that my own health on the whole better than corresponding months of last year. How excellent a Sermon has Venn been preaching on Luke 14:28. Counting the cost if we profess to be Christians. It affected my heart, it humbled me in the dust. How little have I preserved the Christian's peculiar character. How little been living in Christ and Christ in me. O may I do it more. O may I be more a Christian, experience more of the power of religion. My days pass away in hurry and my time is thereby frittered away. Alas. Alas! Yet I don't think it right to go on the retired plan. O may I wait on God diligently. He will then level hills and fill up plains before me; Isa. 40:4. O what unchristian tempers have I found in myself this week. Not kind and not considerate enough. Last night looking at stars more devoutly than for some time. These last two or three weeks have gone on too much like others. No gross times, but O how far too little of the power of Christianity. How low in love. How full of marks of want of due habitual regard to God. Once it was better with me. Remember from where you are fallen and repent. I have been sometimes affected much walking in fields here, and for the last day or two from reading Revelation 2 and 3, Ephesus, Sardis, Laodicea. O may I pray more earnestly, prayer has been sadly neglected and Scripture too little read here.