

Good Words for Every Day of the Year,
Good Words, 1860. Editor, Norman MacLeod, DD.
Edinburgh: Alexander Strahan and Co. London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co.

March 8.

"The hope which is laid up for you in heaven."—Col. i. 5.

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself."—1 John iii. 3.

What a holy influence ought the possession of such a hope to have upon us ! If we, indeed, believe that a home is prepared for us above, that death will be to us the entrance into glory, that eternal life has been purchased for us, and is given to us by Jesus Christ, and that we are heirs to all the holiness and happiness of a world of love—oh, what manner of persons ought we to be ! how humble, how devoted, how holy, how raised above the vanities of earth, how full of love to God, how marked among men for all holy conversation and godliness! We should often think what our hope really is, that we may try ourselves, and our progress in the divine life, by the feeling which such a hope awakens. Is the thought of a holy heaven a bright hope to us? Do we love the prospect, or are we growing indifferent to it and absorbed in worldly things? Surely the very best part of the hope set before us is this, that He will perfect His own work in us, so that the day will come when we shall love Him without distraction and serve Him without weariness.

"Then in a nobler, sweeter song
I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stamm'ring tongue
lies silent in the grave!"

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March 9.

"How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

—Matt. xviii. 12.

Are we to understand by this parable that the one sheep which had gone astray bears the same proportion to the ninety and nine that our sinful, fallen race bears to the unfallen hosts of God's creation—one in a hundred? I know not; but when we read of the "*innumerable* company of angels;" of Daniel's vision of the Ancient of days, to whom "thousand thousands ministered, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;" of John's description of the "many angels round about the throne," "and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," — we are led to an enlarged view of God's great family, and a lowly estimate of our own place among the mighty hosts of those blessed beings who have never gone astray like guilty man. But this would be only vain speculation, did it not lead us to think of the wondrous truth, which is no matter of speculation but of reality — that for man, the poor, wandering, lost sheep of this great fold, the Shepherd left the ninety and nine, and "went out into the mountains," and sought until He found the lost one. For man, the good Shepherd gave His life; and the place of the rescued one, among the happy ones above, is such that the Shepherd "rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray."

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March 10.

"There shall be no night there."—Rev. xxii. 5.

How precious are these words to the ear of the mourning, suffering, or tempted Christian! He is often so surrounded by *night* in his pilgrimage here, that he fears he shall never reach the bright city. He sits in darkness, and has no light; he is full of tossings to and fro till the morning; he knows, by bitter experience, that "night is the time to weep;" but, in the land to which he is going, "the Lamb is the light thereof," and "there shall be no night there." There shall be no night of darkness and coldness, no night of danger and fear, no night of weeping, for all tears shall be wiped away by God himself. There shall be no night of *ignorance*—how often here do we grope in the dark!— no night of *separation* and *error*, when men mistake friends for foes; no night of *slumber*, when the lamps ought to be trimmed and the loins girt, and the servants ought to be waiting for their Lord. There shall be no night of *repose* there, because none will be needed—they are strong to love Him and serve Him there—

"And with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle His throne rejoicing."

Grant, Lord, that we may so walk in the light here, that we may dwell in Thy light hereafter for ever!

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March 11.

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." —Rom. viii. 13.

The same apostle who proclaims so emphatically the great doctrine, that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," (Rom. iii. 28,) brings forward as strongly the doctrine that, "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." There is no opposition between the two; they are the different sides of one great truth, namely, the necessity of a change of heart, the need of that work of the Spirit, on the soul of man, which shall make him holy, before he can become an inhabitant of a holy heaven. The analogy is a simple and beautiful one—taken from what we know by every day's experience—that *what we sow, that we reap*; and he would be looked upon as a fool who expected a contrary result. But there are many such fools in the spiritual field! there are many who see no connexion between the seed and the harvest of the soul; and so common is the tendency to this fatal error, that we have all need to pray, "Lord, in this great concern, suffer not *me* to be thus deceived!"

"Father of mercies! we have need

Of Thy preparing grace:

Let the same hand that gives the seed,

Provide a fruitful place !"

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March 12.

"Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." —Eph. v. 2.

How wonderful is it to think that " Christ hath loved *us!*" What are *we* that the Holy One should regard us with any feelings but those of displeasure! Truly may He say to us, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;" for our hearts were far estranged from Him by nature and by wicked works, and unless He had gone forth upon the mountains to seek His lost and perishing sheep, we could never have found ourselves in His fold. " He hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us;" and can we doubt His love with such a proof as this to convince us of it? Can we suppose that He will forsake those for whom He hath "given *Himself?*" Christian, do not look at your own un-worthiness, but look at His work for you, when unbelief tempts you to ask, " Can He love such a one as me?" And when you feel most the power of His love, and are most wrapped in the glorious thought of the sacrifice He has offered for you, listen to His own voice saying unto you, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; *as I have loved you*, that ye also love one another."

"Jesus, who on His glorious throne,
Rules heaven, and earth, and sea,
Is pleased to claim me for His own,
And give Himself to me.

"His person fixes all my love,
His blood removes my fear,
And while He pleads for me above,
His arm preserves me here."

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March 13.

"And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."—Luke vii. 13.

O Divine tenderness! how truly do these words reveal the heart of Jesus! He was even then about to change her grief into joy, her mourning into gladness, by the life-giving word that was to make her son rise from his bier; but He would not wait for that; before the work of restoring to life, He sent forth the word of sympathy and comfort, so that she was doubly blest; and we cannot doubt that there was that in His voice and in His eye which spoke to her heart even more than the words, and told her, and told all the people also, that "He *had compassion* on her." It is this sense of His sympathy that comes to His people now, in their hour of need, with such irresistible tenderness. He does not raise our dead! they are carried out, and carried away, and the widow sees her only son no more in this world; but if she is Christ's, she is not alone, He still *has compassion*, human in its gentleness, and divine in its power; and when He says to her, "Weep not," He speaks as "One having authority." There are tears that are wept out of a sense of His love!

"Oh, sweetest words that Jesus could have sought,

To soothe the mourning widow's heart, 'Weep not!'

They fall with comfort on my ear,

When life is dark and trouble near."

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March 14.

"The, Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."—Heb. iii. 7, 8.

"My sheep hear my voice."—John x. 27.

To-day, every day, we may hear His voice, if we harden not our hearts; we may hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, and if we are His sheep, no voice will be so welcome to us. He speaks to us in His holy Word by His Spirit, and in this very passage we have one of the strongest proofs that it is He who speaks, for it is not said, "the psalmist David saith," but "the *Holy Ghost* saith." If our Saviour were now on earth, how would men crowd to hear Him ! yet how few listen to the voice by which He still speaks to us from heaven! Oh, may I be preserved from the hardening of heart here spoken of! May I have a tender, lowly heart, ready to listen to every whisper of that blessed voice, whether it comes in the teachings of His Word or of His providences; may I learn to *watch* for it, because it is a still, small voice, and the voices of the world are loud and bewildering. O Lord! "the companions hearken to Thy voice—cause me to hear it! "

"I was a wandering sheep,
I would not be controll'd;
But now I love my Shepherd's voice,
I love, I love the fold!
I was a wayward child,
I once preferred to roam;
But now I love my Father's voice,
I love, I love His home!"

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