

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.

August 22.

"And we have known and believed the love God hath to us."

-- 1 John iv. 16.

What a great thing it is to know and to believe that *God loves us!* Surely if it be so, we cannot remain cold and unaffected; surely a man cannot say, "I know that God loveth me, but I do not know whether I love God." The hardest iceberg must melt, the waters must flow, when the noonday sun pours down its resistless beams on that glassy surface; and the hardest heart must yield to repentant tears, when God by the Holy Spirit reveals the great truth of His own conquering love to that frozen soul. And therefore is it that Satan uses every art to shut out from the hearts of men the knowledge and belief of this love. He seeks to engross their minds with trifles; he tries to blind them with prejudices; he represents to them the character of the God of love; he endeavors to chill again with the cold sneer of ridicule those who have been partially touched with the warm breath of heavenly life; and even among the people of God he perpetually seeks to destroy their vigour by casting into their minds temptations to doubt the love that God bears towards them. Oh, if we would grow in love to God, let us more and more strive to know "the love that God hath to us." Let us gaze on the cross where His love was displayed; till the day shall come when faith is changed into sight, till the love that was seen "through a glass darkly," shall be seen "face to face."

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August 23.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. -- 1 Cor. i. 3.

We hear these sacred words so often that we may have ceased to think what they mean, forgetting the rich store of blessings contained in them. What wonderful gifts to man are this "grace" and this "peace!" They are gifts worthy of the giver, -- "God our Father, and the Lord, Jesus Christ." His grace, so freely bestowed, saves us from sin and from everlasting death; His peace, so dearly bought for us, brings happiness to us, and keeps it with us when nothing else can give it. It is our Father in heaven who thus blesses us, and in proportion to the grace, and the mercy, and the peace, which we receive from Him, we *shall* be *blest* for time and for eternity whatever may be the trials we may have to pass through on earth. Let us strive to realize to ourselves all that He means to give in these words, and we may be better able to face the troubles of life and the sorrows of this "vale of tears." If, on the other hand, we had all that the world could give us, we could not enjoy true happiness for a moment unless He granted us His grace and peace.

"Such thoughts have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer."

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August 24.

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."
--Matt. xxviii. 20.

This promise is *life* to Christ's Church; and not the Church only in its collective capacity, but to each individual member. If we are Christ's, He speaks in these words to us, and what words can be so precious? "Lo, I am with you alway!" I, your Lord, your Life, Your Head, your Hope; I am with you, to save and sanctify, to support you in trouble, to guide you in difficulty, to comfort you in sorrow; I am with you *alway*; the world is dark, and nature languishes when the sun goes down, but Christ is a sun that will never set; where once He has loved, He loves to the end. Life is full of changes; our dearest earthly friends must be taken from us, or we from them; we may be left very lonely and desolate; we may see our comforts removed, and our loved ones buried in the pitiless grave; but there is one Friend, and He *the best*, who says with the pity of a man and the power of a God, "Lo, I am with you alway!" O Saviour, what a thought is this for Thy poor afflicted ones! Well may we say, "Amen," so let it be!

"Begone, unbelief,
My Saviour is near,
And for my relief
Will shortly appear:
By prayer let me wrestle,
And He will perform;
With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm."

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August 25.

"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."
---Proverbs xxvii. 19

There is deep insight in these words. Men look upon the outward differences, and forget the inward likeness between heart and heart; and perhaps one reason why they do so is, that they so seldom suffer *heart* to speak to *heart*; and we are no where told that *head* (or mind) answereth to head. Passions, interests, or opinions make themselves so loudly heard, that the deep still under-current of sympathy is drowned, till at last we almost refuse to believe that hearts ever do answer to each other where the outward difference is so great; until some master mind arises, and by a sudden, penetrating appeal, forces on us the truth, that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin!" And we must heartily and fervently believe this truth, if we would make our way with others, so as to bring their wandering hearts to Christ. We are not to blind ourselves to the great difference between man and man, between the wise man and "the fool," so often described by Solomon, between "him that serveth God and him that serveth him not;" but we must firmly hold that every heart answers to hear in *its need* of a Saviour, in its state of estrangement from God by nature, and in its capacity for being, by God's grace, made meet for glory everlasting. The ripple on the surface may break the image in the water where face answers to face, but no ripple can disturb the deeper likeness in these respects between heart and heart.

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August 26.

"The wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable."
-- James iii. 17.

There is a purity often overlooked when this verse is quoted; we are told that wisdom is *first pure*--pure in doctrine; *then* peaceable; but men forget to add that the wisdom from above must also be pure from that most earthly element--*party spirit*. Alas that so much of this enters into all our controversies, and darkens the hearts and understanding of men even upon the most sacred subjects. We forget how needful it is to hold the truth in *love* as well as in purity; ; indeed the two cannot be severed, for there is no true purity without love. Let us search and try our hearts, and ask the Lord to search and try us, when we venture to condemn the ways or opinions of others, lest we should be found doing so, if not *wrongly*, at least from wrong motives. They may deserve censure (and we are not to "call evil good"), but, in censuring, let us remember how needful it is for us to keep *our own spirits pure*, and say "From all *uncharitableness*, good Lord, deliver us!"

"Be Thou my pattern; make me bear
More of thy gracious image here,
Then God the Judge shall own my name
Among the followers of the Lamb."

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August 27.

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem: and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the people of Israel." -- Joel iii. 14-16.

How awful is the thought of that great day of the Lord! Do we *really* believe it, and are we willing to pass through this world as *triflers*? Time is rapidly passing on, and nothing can arrest its march toward that day which shall be its close; yet how little influence does the sure prospect of these things have on the hearts of men! how few reflect that the day *will assuredly come*, be it sooner or later, when they must stand each one for himself or for herself in that awful valley of decision amidst the shaking of heaven and earth, and surrounded by terrors, of which those of Mount Sinai when "Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake," were but a feeble image! But "the Lord will be the hope of His people" in that day; there is *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus. The valley of decision will but confirm them in everlasting happiness through Him whom they have been enabled to choose for their portion *now*, in the accepted time, in the day of salvation.

"Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed;
Teach me to die that so I may
Rise glorious on the judgment-day."

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August 28.

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." --Phil. iii. 10.

What was the knowledge for which St. Paul counted all things but loss? It was the "excellency of the knowledge of His Lord Jesus Christ," to know Him, whom to know is life eternal, Him whom he had once persecuted. ("I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.") to *know* Him, to *win* Him and be *found* in Him, this was now his great aim, and to know "the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings," this was his path of progress which he was always pressing on. It is only those who are united to Christ by believing in Him that can know the *power* of His resurrection. That power is no less than the exceeding greatness of the power of God (Eph. i. 19). The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the only power that can quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins; as impossible is it for a dead body to raise itself, as for a dead soul to do, so till he speaks the life-giving word, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."

"Mighty to redeem and save,
Thou hast overcome the grave;
Thou the bars of death hast riven,
Opened wide the gate of heaven.

Soon in glory Thou shalt come,
Taking thy poor pilgrims home;
Jesus, then we all shall be
Ever, ever Lord, with Thee!"