

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.

December 1.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." --Psalm I. 15.

"In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me."
-- Ps. lxxxvi. 7.

This is the holy echo returned by the heaven-taught soul, to the voice of God, and surely He loves to hear it! Let me ask myself, Do I indeed realize the fulness of this privilege and the greatness of this promise? Men are ready enough to call upon God in trouble, "every man unto his God," like Jonah's shipmates; but it is only the true believer who calls in the confidence of sure faith, saying to the Lord, who has promised to deliver him, "Thou wilt answer me!" He will answer us in his wisdom as well as in his love. It may be that the deliverance will be different from what we expect, and perhaps it will be a far greater deliverance. He may see it needful to deliver us from a perverse clinging to our own wish and our own will, that we may be free to glorify Him by saying, "*not my will, but Thine be done.*" Thus the Christian will find the true deliverance from his burden of trouble, and he will record the fulfilment of his prayer among his experiences of mercy, saying, "I called, and thou didst answer me," whether he gains his wish or not.

"That were a grief I could not bear
Didst thou not hear and answer prayer,
But a prayer-hearing, answering God
Supports me under every load."

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December 2.

“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” -- Ps. xxxii. 5.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” -- 1 John i. 9.

As long as we are in this world we shall never in our Christian course, get beyond the need of confession and the need of pardon; confession to whom: “unto *thee*,” for “against thee, thee only, have I sinned;” pardon from whom? From *Thee*, for Thou art “*faithful* and *just* to forgive our sins.’ Those are very wonderful words as applied to forgiveness; they speak of a covenant by which the law, which we have transgressed, has been fulfilled, so that the just and holy God can exercise *justice* in forgiveness; observe, not mercy and pity only, but *justice*. Oh, then, with this revelation of the character of God before me, and this knowledge of the way of forgiveness, let me confess, at His mercy-seat, all the wanderings, weakness, and wickedness of my heart, not merely as the disease of an evil nature for which I am to be pitied, but as my own vile transgression of His holy law, for which I loathe myself, and am repent in dust and ashes! The more I believe in His free forgiveness, the more shall I hate the evil of my sin against Him.

“Though sin would fill me with distress
The throne of grace I dare address,
For Jesus is my righteousness.”

December 3.

“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.” -- Ps. lxxviii. 17.

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.” -- Dan. vii. 10.

Let us think of our fellow-worshippers in the upper sanctuary; of their numbers, their perfect service, their glorious and unfallen holiness! We have glimpses in God’s word of a wondrous world of light and love far beyond what we can conceive, and we are not to think of it as wholly apart and alienated from us, for the worshippers above form part of the household of our Father, “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named;” “Ye are come,” says the Apostle, “unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and *to an innumerable company of angels*,” . . . “and to the *spirits of just men made perfect*,” angels and spirits of just men are there united in holy fellowship, they praise their God as with one voice, and they do His will and His work, resting not day nor night in their sweet service! When we mourn to think how few serve Him on earth, and how feeble and imperfect is the best service offered here below, let us lift up our thoughts to that blessed company above, and rejoice to think that *there* He is worthily praised!

“Their worship no interval knows,
Their fervour is still on the wing,
And while they protect my repose
They sing to the praise of my King.
I, too, at the season ordained,
Their chorus for ever will join,
And love and adore, without end
Their faithful Creator and mine.”

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December 4.

"While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud." -- Luke ix. 34.

Who does not fear to enter into the cloud? Who does not shrink from the prospect of approaching sorrow, and shudder as the cold shadow comes darkly over the sunshine of his life? When we think of the unknown future, we know that while there may be in its bosom many a cloud for us, there must be, at least, one for every child of mortality -- the cloud that hangs over the valley of the shadow of death! To many this cloud is the very blackness of darkness for ever; but the people of God, like Israel in Egypt, have light in their dwellings; the Christian sees a light and hears a voice, which the world can neither see nor hear, when this cloud gathers over him; that light is the light of eternity; that voice is the voice of Jesus; and the cloud which he had often feared to enter becomes to him the very house of God, the gate of heaven. Lord, I know that clouds shall come: O do Thou be with me then, so shall I fear no evil. May I but keep my Saviour in view, I shall not need to fear its approach. May I but find Thee present to strengthen me, I shall not need to tremble at its darkness. Beyond the clouds there is perpetual sunshine beyond this world "there is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

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December 5.

" The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." -- Thess. iii. 12.

This is the apostle's prayer for the Thessalonians, and mark his acknowledgement of the answer to it in his Second Epistle to them, (ch. i, 3,) "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." He had asked for them an increase of charity, and now he thanks God that He has given it. We mourn the want of charity in the church; we regret that the brethren do not, for Christ's sake, love each other more; we see Christian churches sadly at variance with each other; and even in the same community of Christians how often have we to lament discussions of a most unseemly kind among those who ought to be most closely united. Do we take the apostle's way, and make it our earnest prayer that the Lord would send forth an increasing and abounding spirit of *love* among His people? Let his example encourage us to do so, and like him it may be that our prayer shall be speedily turned into thanksgiving. Above all, let us seek for an increase of *love* in our own hearts; love, prayer, and faith cannot fail to bring down a blessing!

"Help us to build each other up,
Our little stock improve;
Increase our faith, confirm our hope,
And perfect us in love!"

December 6.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men." --John i. 4.

What cause for thankfulness and praise to God is here, that in all the dark and painful questions which perplex us on earth, there is one light, a sure light--the life of Christ. Are we groping to find a way back to God? Christ's life is our light. Are we in darkness as to whether we are among those chosen for eternal life? Christ *received all who come to Him* while He was on earth, and on the mystery of election His life is our only light. Are we in darkness as to how we can walk so as to please God? Christ is our Example, His life our light. Are we gazing on a freshly-closed tomb with all its dreary darkness? Christ's life is the only light that has ever pierced this gloom, or ever can. The deathless life that sprung from the grave on the third day sheds a flood of light on the unseen land. Truly hast Thou said, O Jesus, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness."

" Walk in the light! and thou shalt find
Thy heart made truly His
Who dwells in cloudless light enshrined,
In whom no darkness is.
Walk in the light! and thou shalt own
Thy darkness passed away,
Because that light hath on thee shone
In which is perfect day."

December 7.

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." --Ps. cxvi. 7, 8.

Poor wandering, doubting, fearing soul, there is a rest even for thee. Hear the voice of Jesus; He says, "I will give you rest." Thou that hast wandered in paths of darkness, vainly speculating on things too high for thee, till thy peace became the prey of the spoiler, return unto thy rest; return unto Christ, return to the first love; return, for the Lord is full of mercy, the Lord *already hath* dealt bountifully with thee. Oh, the sweetness of the rest of faith after the labour of unbelief! Blessed be the Lord that He leaves us not to our own vain wanderings; He goeth out upon the mountains to seek His poor lost sheep, and bringeth it home with rejoicing. And shall not the sheep rejoice too in that day, and bless the Shepherd whose eye has followed him in all his ways, and who has, by His mighty power, redeemed him from the hand of the enemy? The sense of deliverance may be in some measure felt here; but what will it be when *all* is known? When the sinner, saved by Christ, sees from what a death his soul has been delivered, from what a fall his feet have been saved!

"When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe."