

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 15.

“I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”
-- Ex. xx. 2, 3.

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” -- Ps. lxxi. 10.

Two different lessons are set to those whom the Lord has redeemed, and the thought of what He has wrought for them is to be the motive for both. He has brought us out of the land of Egypt that we may serve Him. He has saved us from the house of bondage that we may delight in His commandments. “If any man love me, he will keep my words.” There is no bondage in this service; it is rather the only freedom, the only liberty which a man can attain to. Again, the Lord our God has brought us out of the land of Egypt, that knowing His love and trusting in His promises, we may open our mouths and ask for large supplies of heavenly grace. We need His help all the way through. Redeemed as we are, we cannot go up alone through the wilderness. What He has already done is the proof of what He is willing to do. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Lord, teach us, teach me to pray!

December 16.

“Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” -- Matt. xi. 6.

“The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed.” -- 1 Pet. ii. 7.

How true is it that “the carnal mind is enmity against God!” All the miracles of love wrought by Jesus could not overcome the opposition of His enemies, nor prevent them from being “offended” in Him. Christ’s holy gospel must ever be “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence” to them that are disobedient to His laws. They find fault with His ministers at one time for too great boldness; at another for too great backwardness, striving to escape from the censure which the truth casts on them by attacking the conduct of its followers in every respect. It was thus with the men of our Saviour’s day; it is so in our own day; and the cause is ever the same--the enmity of the carnal heart to the offence of the Cross. But “more is he that is with us than all they that are against us.” The Cross must prevail; its triumphs must spread until the Lord shall come again in His glory, for “He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

“The Christian’s badge of honour here
Has ever been the Cross;
And when its hidden joys appear,
He counts it gain, not loss.”

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December 17.

“Jesus saw him lie and knew that he had been now a long time in that case.” -- John v. 6.

Thirty-eight years -- it was indeed a long time to suffer; a long time to lie helpless beside the healing waters and yet be unable to reach them! It was a long time to endure the sickness of the heart from hope deferred! But Jesus knew the man's case; He had seen him lie there all those long years; He had purposed for him a greater miracle of mercy than had ever before been wrought beside that wonderful Bethesda pool. And He knows now the case of every one of His people who is called to bear the cross of bodily pain, as well as He knew this man's case. Christian sufferer, think of this! Say not, “The Lord hath forgotten me! He hideth His face.” -- No, He knows and sees every hour of suffering as it passes wearily over thy head; He knows that though health of the body is a precious benefit, health of soul is infinitely better, and if the one is gained at the expense of the other, the Christian knows that it is well worth the price! He would not lose the lessons gained in his sick-bed for all the joys of health; -- he lies there in the eye of Jesus, watched over by the Lord himself, and permitted to glorify him by his patience, if not by his active labours, till the years of suffering are ended, and the time, that seemed so long, seems but as a day in the light of eternity!

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December 18.

“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him” -- Col. ii. 9, 10.

To have nothing in ourselves, -- to be complete in Him, -- this is what we ought to feel ourselves; and happy is it for us if every fresh discovery of our own sins, shortcomings, and infirmities, leads us to a fresh discovery of some of the fulness in Christ by which He makes His people complete in Him. He calls us to a wondrous union with Himself, and it is only while we “abide in Him” by virtue of this union, that we can either live or bear fruit. Am I weary and heavy-laden? He says, “I will give you rest.” Am I ignorant and out of the way? He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Am I guilty? He is the propitiation for our sins. Am I sorrowful? He says, “I am He that comforteth you.” Am I in darkness? He is “the light of the world,” the “sun of righteousness,” the “bright and morning star.” Do I want a friend? He is a “friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” If I am poor -- He is the Lord over all, rich in mercy to all that call upon Him. If I am weak and foolish--He is “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” O to know Him more in all His fulness! O to know myself in such a way that the sense of helplessness and sin may more and more endear to me this gracious Saviour!

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December 19.

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”

-- Hebrews iv. 14.

It seems to be part of natural religion, as it certainly is of revealed religion, that without a priest and a sacrifice guilty man cannot approach a holy God. Even the heathen feel this, and men sin against an instinct of nature as well as against God’s Word, when, in the pride of a false philosophy, they think to approach God acceptably without a propitiation -- a mediator. “We have a great high Priest;” we are not left in darkness; we know through whom we may come to our God. Let us then “hold fast our profession,” and neither venture on the one hand, to make our approaches to God without Christ, nor on the other, make His mighty priesthood virtually of no effect by looking either to priests on earth or saints in heaven, to do for us what He alone can do. He is the High Priest *for ever*; His work of intercession never ceases, though His work of atonement for our sins was perfected for ever, when His voice proclaimed, in His hour of death and of victory, “It is finished!” Then our High Priest, “after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;” and there he sits, and “sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied,” as often as He sees poor sinners coming back to their Father as returning penitents, and saying, Lord, save me, *for Jesus Christ’s sake!*”

“By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,
Although with sin defiled;
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am owned a child.”

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December 20.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” -- Matt. v. 5.

“As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” -- 2 Cor. vi. 10.

Teach me, O Lord, the secret of this rich poverty! May I look at the example of Him who, though Lord of all, “had not where to lay his head;” and may I learn from Him to be indeed meek and lowly in heart. The meek even now inherit the earth, for they can enjoy it in the light of God’s countenance, though not a foot of it may be theirs in the worldly sense of possession. They delight to trace God’s hand in its beauties, and what matters it to them who possesses its hills and its valleys, as long as they can

“Lift to heaven an unpretentious eye,
And smiling say, ‘My Father made them all!’”

They possess all things, in possessing Christ! O let this thought make us watchful against entangling our hearts with earthly things; if the heart is filled with the world, it cannot be filled with Christ; and just inasmuch as we grasp with eagerness the perishing goods of time, we loosen our grasp of faith on the things that are within the veil, the real riches of eternity. We are not called to the artificial device of making the cloister vow of poverty, but all the more is it our high privilege as well as duty, so to empty our hearts of this world’s treasures, as to have them filled with God’s treasures of heavenly grace.

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December 21.

“ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” -- 1 Peter i. 6.

How many dear children of God are “*in heaviness* through manifold temptations!” How few children of God attain their heavenly rest without passing through this training, without being “for a season in heaviness!” But there is a need-be for every such season; we can often, even now, see this; we shall see it all hereafter, and be enabled to praise Him for all, not in faith only, but with full sight of His *wise love* to us. This life is so short, we have not time to spend it all in ease; we must have our school-time as well as our play, for many lessons have to be learned, and some are very hard ones! Therefore we are often “in heaviness,” bowed down in spirit, mourning for dear ones taken from us, or pining on weary sickbeds, but it is only “for a season.” Our Lord leaves none of those who love Him in that awful darkness, which is “not for a season,” but for ever! And even during the time of heaviness He tells them of an inheritance reserved in heaven for them, and of a power that is able to keep them through faith unto salvation, in which even now they may “greatly rejoice.”