

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 22.

“O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”
--Rom. xi. 33.

All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord! but it is the high privilege of man alone, the chief of Thy works below, to praise Thee *intelligently*, and if he cannot praise as the angels do, who behold Thee above, he can, at least, lift up his eye so far as to see that Thy glory is unsearchable, and look into the riches of Thy wisdom and knowledge, so far as to exclaim, “*O the depth!*” “All thy works shall praise thee; and thy *saints* shall bless thee; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.” It was consideration of the glory of His kingdom and the wonders of His government in dealing with Jews and Gentiles according to the good pleasure of His will, that drew forth from St. Paul this burst of adoration; those things which most of all excite the enmity of the carnal heart are those which called forth the apostle’s loudest notes of praise, for he had *faith*; he believed in the wisdom and love and mercy of his God; and keeping in mind that God is a King as well as a Father, he bowed in lowly submission and loving confidence. Let this mind be in me, O God!

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December 23.

“Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth.” --Isa. xxx. 1, 2.

How many of our sorrows arise from our rebellious refusal to take counsel of the Lord! He offers us *His* guidance; he invites us in *everything* to make known our requests unto Him, but how often do we act like those rebellious Israelites whom the Prophet in this chapter so solemnly rebukes for their contempt of God’s word and counsel! The folly of a child who would reject his parent’s skilful guidance, and prefer to go alone through a wide desert on a dark night, would be nothing to the folly of those who reject the only hand that can help them, the only skill that can guide them in the long journey of life, and prefer to follow the guidance of their own ignorance to that of heavenly wisdom. Lord, do Thou enable me in all things to seek and to follow Thy counsel, and grant, that having made known my requests in childlike confidence to Thee, I may experience the fulfilment of Thy promise, that “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.”

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December 24.

“Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.” -- Luke ix. 26.

“Whosoever shall confess me before men, him also shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God, but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.” -- Luke xii. 8, 9.

“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. -- Romans x. 10.

Strange indeed it must seem to the “holy angels” that a man should ever be ashamed of Christ: and yet the Lord knew the need of this solemn warning, and on at least two occasions repeated it in the ears of His disciples, Have I thought enough of the necessity of *confessing* Christ as well as believing on Christ? Men utter many sophistries in these days to get rid of this, but Christ’s own word stands unchanged, an awful witness against the coward’s wish to escape from the duty. Lord, make me a true disciple of Christ, and suffer me not to be ever ashamed of being so. May I exercise a constant guard on myself, and never for a moment even wish to shrink from confessing my Lord!

December 25.

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” --Matt. i. 1.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” -- John i. 1.

How wonderful, how mysterious, how glorious is the link which connects these two verses, -- *“the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us!”* Jesus the Son of God became the Son of Man! Let us not ask *how* this could be! But with lowly faith in this grand truth let us ask *why* it was so? Why did the Son of God take our nature upon Him? --and how full an answer do we receive; He came to “save his people from their sins.” He came to redeem us; to live as our example, to die as our atonement; for when we had destroyed ourselves through sin, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Grant, O God, that we may so fix the eye of faith upon this glorious Saviour, God and Man, that we may behold His glory both now and for ever! May we see how strong He is to save, and how willing to help; how mighty as God to deliver us, how tender and loving as man to sympathize with us; a perfect Saviour, -- the Word who was in the beginning, -- yet the babe born in Bethlehem!

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December 26.

“Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings.”
Psalm xvii. 8.

“He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.” --Zechariah ii. 8.

Surely the Psalmist's prayer must have been in the Prophet's mind when he uttered this promise, for it is, like the petition, a very peculiar and expressive one. We know how tenderly sensitive is the “apple of the eye,” so that we guard it from the slightest touch by involuntary instinct; and the prayer to be so guarded, is founded alike on a deep feeling of weakness and a strong faith in God's care. The promise is a beautiful response to the petition; nothing can more fully set forth the tender care of God for His own people. We ask with wonder, Can it be that Thou, O Holy One, dost look with such regard on such as we? Well may we be amazed at Thy condescension and pity, and rejoice to believe that whatever trials we may meet with, *Thou* dost not forget us, Thou dost not forsake us! And if Thy people are so dear to Thee, how precious ought they to be in our eyes! How careful should we be lest we offend one of the least of Thy little ones! How willingly should we open our hearts to receive in love all those whom Thou, our Father, dost “keep as the apple of the eye!”

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December 27.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” -- Phil. iii. 10.

“The fellowship of his sufferings,” -- how may this be known? How can we in any measure or manner enter into it? We can only say, Lord, teach us! Lead us into this knowledge which St. Paul aimed at attaining! Let us stand in spirit with those women who stood by the cross of Jesus, and beheld with their own weeping eyes all His pains and woes; and let us remember the cause of those sufferings, and behold Him as the Lamb of God slain for the sin of the world! Many there were in the days of His flesh who saw the cross of Christ with their bodily eyes, but not with the eye of faith. May ours be the blessing promised to those who, on the contrary, “have not seen, and yet have believed;” when we meditate on His sufferings, may we think of Him as suffering for *us*, and be enabled to say with St. Paul, “I am crucified with Christ.”

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December 28.

“God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” -- Ps. xlviii. 3.

The dwellers in “palaces” need God for a refuge as much as the dwellers in the meanest abodes of poverty. Rank and riches can neither shut out sorrow nor save from sin; education and refinement cannot bring the soul nearer to Christ; and it is a solemn thought for the rich, and a fearful thought for those who *trust* in riches, that it is Jesus Himself who has said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” Oh, if we could see things as God sees them, how lightly would we esteem all the wealth of palaces where God was not known as a refuge! How little would we value a place in them compared with a place in God’s house! How poor would the honours of this world seem in comparison with the honour of being a child of God, an heir of glory! And yet, alas! how often do we see even Christian men pressing on as eagerly in the race for riches as if heaven could be bought for money, forgetting that possession which God’s Word declares to be indeed *great gain* -- “Godliness, with contentment.” Let us seek to know Christ as our refuge now in the accepted time, for the day approaches when we must *all* stand before Him as our Judge!