

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 22.

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."—John xvii. 21.

The mind is overwhelmed when trying to enter into the meaning of this great and deep prayer, and seeking to understand this mighty *oneness* of which our Saviour prays that His people may be partakers. Divided, as they too often are, it is good for them to keep in mind, that their Lord's desire is that they "may be one;" He has asked this for them, and what a standard—what a measure of oneness has He prayed for! "As Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee!" an inconceivably deep, close, eternal union of character—of love! Am I following the mind of Jesus in this thing? Am I seeking to love all His members for His sake ? Am I looking, not at their failings, but at their union with Him—our Head—both theirs and mine, as a reason for love? These questions ought to be asked by Christians who wish to be Christ-like; the answer may be often humbling, but should lead to much prayer and watchfulness ; and let us remember that, as the time will assuredly come at last, when this prayer of the Saviour will be fulfilled, it becomes us *now* to cultivate such a spirit of love as we shall in that day wish that we had always cherished towards even the least of Christ's true disciples.

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March 23.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. 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? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."—Matt. xviii. 10-14.

Note how the connexion between these verses unfolds the scheme by which "little ones" are saved. We may not doubt that they are subjects of grace; we are to "take heed" not to *despise* them; a warning not given unless needed; great and mysterious privileges are theirs, dimly revealed by the expression, "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven;" and all this not from any innocence or inherent purity in them, but because the Son of man came to save *the lost!* These little ones, like other children of Adam, were lost, but they are found in Christ; He seeks lambs as well as the sheep which went astray, and all because of the free grace of the Father, for it is not His will that one of those little ones should perish. Oh, what a vast multitude of redeemed little ones glorify His name on high ! These are they who are redeemed out of every nation, and kingdom, and people, and tongue, taken from this sinful world in infancy, and saved by Him who "came to save that which was lost." May the old sheep follow them into the fold!

"Around the throne of God in heaven
Ten thousand children stand,
Whose sins are all by Christ forgiven,
A holy, happy band,
Singing, Glory, glory, glory!"

March 24.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

—Ps. ciii. 2.

"Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies."—Ps. cvi. 7.

Let us not be guilty of sinning "with our fathers" in this respect. We marvel at their ingratitude, let us see that we do not partake their sin. Strange that it should be so common a one; for what exercise can be more delightful, elevating, and encouraging than that of recalling the mercies of God, and giving Him thanks for all His benefits ? I do not know a better way of dissipating the cloud of care which the shadow of approaching trouble will sometimes cast upon the mind, than to follow David's holy example, and, turning from present anxieties, call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to "bless the Lord, and forget not all His benefits." Let us recount them if we can, they soon exceed our power to number or express. Let us give Him thanks, and acknowledge each as *His* good gift to us, whether for this life or for that which is to come; and when we have added to this the thought that we are unworthy of the least of His benefits, less than the least of His mercies, shall not our hearts burn within us with gratitude, till we rise with the apostle to the highest of all, and cry, "thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!"

"While harps unnumber'd sound His praise

In yonder world above,

His saints on earth admire His ways,

And glory in His love."

March 25.

"I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." —Ps. xl. 17.

"He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy."—Ps. lxxii. 13.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." —Rev. iii. 17.

It is not those who are rich in their own eyes that receive the true riches; it is the *poor and needy*. Those who confess themselves to be so, are those on whom the Lord thinketh, and to whom He promises the full treasures of His grace. We are too ready to forget our deep spiritual poverty, and none are so apt to do so as those who, like the Laodiceans, are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm. It is sad to be "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," but saddest of all to be in this condition and *not know it*; to be flattering ourselves in our own eyes; to be saying, "I am rich," in the midst of our abject poverty; and, all the while, to be regardless of the gold tried in the fire, and the white raiment so freely offered to us. O Lord, make us know our poverty! make us know Thy riches! Teach us to come to Thee as poor and needy beggars. Those who beg for this world's goods may well be our example—they confess their wants freely, and they beg earnestly, importunately, humbly; yet it has never been said to them, as to us, "ask, and ye shall receive."

"Poor, weak, and worthless though I am,
I have a rich, almighty Friend,
Jesus, the Saviour, is His name,
He freely loves, and without end."

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March 26.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." —Exod. iii. 5.

Our faith in God is not a right faith, unless it is *reverential*, for reverence is seeing Him who is invisible. Though He has now "in these last days spoken to us by His Son," and has granted unto us a revelation of His glory, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," He is still to be worshipped with the same depth of awe and reverence, as when He said to Moses, "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." And let us remember this when we approach the mercy-seat—the place where we seek to meet with God in prayer, whether in the sanctuary, or in the closet, or under the blue canopy of the heavens which He has made, or on a sick-bed, or on a journey, where-ever it may be, it is a place where we must stand with reverence and godly fear, putting away earthly thoughts, as the shoes from our feet, and striving to attain worthy thoughts of Him in whose presence we stand.

"Thy mansion is the Christian's heart, O Lord,

Thy dwelling-place secure!

Bid the unruly throng depart,

And leave the consecrated door."

March 27.

"Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."—Prov. i. 33.

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."—Ps. cxii. 7.

There are some persons whose minds are of so anxious a cast, that the *fear* of evil is to them as great a trial as evil itself. Apprehensions of some approaching calamity disturb their peace; they take affliction home to themselves before God sends it; and, therefore, they do not receive the strength to bear it, which He has promised to His people in the day, but not before the day of their distress. In the verses quoted above, we have the cure for this spirit given to us—"Whoso hearkeneth unto me"—unto heavenly Wisdom—"shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Resting in God he is safe, and he knows it; trusting in the Lord, "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings," he need not be afraid, and he feels that he need not, for he has learned by experience that if sorrow does come, and evil tidings do reach him, his God will be with him still, and he knows that He can sustain him, whatever may be the lot He appoints for him, or the trials He sends him on earth.

"Then, whate'er the future prove,
Let not fear my spirit move;
Let me never doubt Thy love,
O my Father!

"On Thy wisdom let me rest,
Sure Thy way is ever best,
So shall peace possess my breast,
From my Father!"

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March 28.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—Matt. vi. 22.

"This one thing I do."—Phil. iii. 13.

Singleness of aim gives great power to the character, and this is as true of the Christian as of the man of the world. The man whose heart is divided by various interests and aims brings "forth no fruit to perfection;" but he whose "eye is single," and directed to the glory of God, sees his way plainly and clearly, and follows it with a cheerful decision to which the divided heart can never attain. The Psalmist says, "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness," he is not left a prey to uncertainty and perplexity, he is seeking to do God's will, not his own, and this simplifies every question of duty to him; God gives him light enough to do His will, when he seeks it in uprightness. The apostle says, "this *one thing* I do," he concentrated his soul upon the great work, therefore he was enabled to do so much. Lord, do Thou so free us from selfish aims and worldly interests, that we may have that *single eye* to which Thou hast promised to give light!

"I want a true regard,
A single, steady aim,
Unmoved by threatening or reward,
To Thee and Thy great name.
A jealous, just concern
For Thine immortal praise,
A pure desire that all may learn
And glorify Thy grace!"