

October 1.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." -- John vii. 17.

Some mysteries are unlocked by the key of *faith*, others by the key of *obedience*. Christ tells us that those who would know his doctrine must do his will; for the heart that remains rebellious against Him *cannot* receive his truth. Some minds, by tampering with temptation, and listening to the serpent voice that still says to the children of Eve, "*Yea God hath said it!*" -- get into a *habit* of doubting, which is one of the soul's worst diseases. It is of no use to tell a man in this state that he must *believe*; he has no longer the childlike heart of faith, which he had when first he came to Christ; he has wandered from the light, he walks in mists and darkness; misled by meteors and false fires of seeming brightness. But let such a one listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd; it speaks to him and points out the true way of recovery in those words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Let him *obey*, then shall he *know*. Let him return to a closer walk with God, let him "keep himself unspotted from the world;" for oh, how often does wandering in faith begin by wanderings in practice, wanderings after vanity! And for his comfort, let him take home to his heart the *sure* promise that if he thus *does* God's will, he shall sooner or later *know* his doctrine.

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.

October 2.

“Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan ...But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.”

-- Gen. xiii. 10, 11, 13.

The principle upon which Lot made his choice was *worldly advantage*. The natural beauty of Sodom made him quite overlook its moral deformity; and though, in the end, he himself was “saved yet so as by fire,” his family were all *lost* in one way or another, and *bitterly* must he have repented having chosen as his portion that beautiful but accursed land. There is nothing that is such a stumbling block to others, especially to the younger members of a family, as the sight of a professing Christian, “a righteous man,” as Lot is said to have been, deliberately making his choice on the principle of worldly advantages. The world is very sharp-sighted; men discern at once the reason of such a choice; and the children of the house say in their hearts, “If our parent indeed sought first the kingdom of God for himself and us, would he have introduced us to such company, placed us in such schools or professions, or taken us to live in such a godless place as this?” These are some of the reasons why the sons of godly men often turn out so ungodly. “The Lord is my portion, saith my soul!” Oh, may He enable me to seek Him with a *single* heart!

“From the time that thee I know,
Nothing great I’d seek below;
Pleased with all the Lord provides,
Weaned from all the world besides.”

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October 3.

"Not my will, but thine, be done." -- Luke xxii. 42.

" I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."
-- John v. 30.

Look to Jesus, Christian, to learn what true submission is! Look at the agony, the wrestling, the anguish of his soul in that bitter hour of mystery, and hear above all that suffering the voice of complete resignation rising up to his Father in heaven, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Oh, that we could thus lay our wills at our Father's feet, and own no will but His! Yet *self* is strong, and the conquest is slow; often when we think the victory gained, and the spirit brought into subjection, some new trial arises which throws us completely off our guard, and the perverse rebellious will starts up as unsubdued as ever! We are like children who try to escape by any means the necessity of *obedience*; we would do some great thing, or give some costly sacrifice rather than follow the lowly, narrow, steep pathway of submission to His will! How thankful may we be that He does not leave us to our own vain will. He exercises long-suffering patience toward us; and chastenings are not spared when needed to bring us back to lowly submission. Let us not weary of His discipline, but rather pray that His Spirit may so dwell and reign within us that His blessed will may become to us sweeter than our own.

"Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with Thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say
Thy will be done. "

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October 4.

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”
--Luke xxiii. 34.

Let us ask God to give us a right understanding of these wonderful words! “Forgive them!” Whom? His murderers! Yea, even those for whose sake He left His throne in heaven and came down to earth; those whom He came to save! “Forgive them!” But God is a righteous Governor as well as a Father; can He forgive those who are in the very act of defying His law? Behold, here the way of forgiveness opened. He who utters this prayer is even at the same moment paying the debt of the guilty; suffering, the just for the unjust; and is not only revealing to us, in these wondrous words, the heaven of Divine mercy and love in his own heart but is showing us at the same time, for the salvation of penitent sinners in every age, *how* God may be “just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” This petition shows us Jesus as the High Priest, offering at once His sacrifice and His intercession. In this widest stretch of the arm of His Divine mercy, we behold that mercy standing on a firm rock, a sure basis, the Law of God magnified and made honourable. If we would see the result of that prayer, let us look at the crowd listening to Peter some six weeks after in that guilty city, as he tells them that “God hath made that same Jesus whom *ye have crucified*, both Lord and Christ. Now, when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren what shall we do!”

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October 5.

"The love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 39.

Who can tell what that love is? Who can ascend to its heights, or go down to its depths; or tell how far back it has reached in the long ages of the past, or how far forward it stretches through the eternity of the future? Who can say how many millions it has made happy, or how many it will make happy for ever? "The love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" is *infinite* like God Himself! How unutterably awful it must be to be shut out from that love! How unspeakably blessed to dwell in its light for ever! Can I sink beneath sorrow, or pain, or anxiety if I have for my portion "*the love of God.*" It can only be when I wander out of *this* sunshine that I can be indeed in darkness. Let me then seek to live *always* in the light, and walk in the light. Then if trials are my appointed lot, I shall be enabled still to see *love* in them all; if my dear earthly friends are removed from me, I shall be surrounded by the *love* of One who will never leave nor forsake me; if confined to a sick-room with pain for my constant companion, I shall still have *Him* with me whose love in Christ is better than all that this world at its best can bestow!

"Trials must and will befall
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me."

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October 6.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” --Rev. xiv. 13.

That voice from heaven is still speaking to us; let us lift our eyes from the grave and listen to it, and lift our hearts in praise to Him whose blessing falls like a sunbeam on the lowly resting-places of all those who “sleep in Jesus.” “*Blessed* are the dead which die in the Lord.” He has blessed them and they shall be blest! They are dead to sin and grief and pain; they are alive to God, alive to joy and bliss unspeakable; and the voice of the Spirit of God confirms this truth, and tells *how blest* they are, how the weary rest from their labours, “and their works do follow them!” To the worldly man death is *terrible*; it is all *loss* to him whose portion is of the earth; to the believer it is all *gain*. We know little as to where his happy spirit flies when it leaves its earthly abode, but we do not for a moment dare to doubt the happiness of those whom the Lord has declared “*blessed*.” “Absent from the body,” “present with the Lord,” this is their condition, and ought we for them to sorrow as those without hope? Grant us, O Lord, such a steadfast belief in Thy Word, that we may heartily “bless Thy holy name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear; beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples that with them we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom.”

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October 7.

"Wait on the Lord; and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." -- Ps. xxvii. 14.

Whose voice is it that says to us with such authority, "Wait, *I say*, on the Lord?" It is one to whose experience we may well give heed, for who has sounded the depths, or soared to the heights like David? Who has walked in such darkness, or sung praises in such light as he? And this is what he says to us, "*Wait* on the Lord." The Christian's path is not all sunshine; sometimes the Lord may hide His face for a season, because of the sin, or vanity, or earthliness of the heart which He would train for heaven. Then He calls to us to search and try our ways, but He also tells us, "*Wait* on the Lord;" do not question his love; even *now* cleave to Christ; "be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." These times of trial are not for our destruction, but for our profit; "to try us and prove us, and show us what is in our hearts;" and He who tries is even then watching us, and will not suffer the gold to be lost in the furnace, but only the dross. Let us then listen to His sweet counsel, and strengthen our hearts on His promises; let us look away from self to Christ and to Christ's *perfect work for us*, and if we thus *wait*, we shall soon have cause to praise Him for the help of His countenance.

"Though tempest-tossed and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shattered bark again."