

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 8.

"And Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" --John xi. 40.

Some great truths lie hid for us beneath great sorrows, and do not spring up till they are watered with many tears. Perhaps Martha *thought* that she believed before, but how different was her faith when it sprang up from the empty grave of Lazarus! And Mary may have thought that she well knew the sympathy of Jesus, but she knew it very differently when beside the tomb she saw with her own eyes, that "*Jesus wept.*" Thus may many truths lie on the surface, assented to, but unproductive of any real good or life, till sorrow forces them deep down into the river heart, and they spring with a power and a freshness that makes them seem wholly new to us. Jesus seems to say to us as to his disciples of old, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" No, we have not known Him! We have known nothing of His love and His power; we know nothing of ourselves, of our own evil, and of His forgiving mercy. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but *now* mine eye seeth Thee! Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

"What though it pierced my fainting heart,
I bless Thine hand that caused the smart;
It taught my tears awhile to flow,
But saved me from eternal woe."

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October 9.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed." -- 2 Cor. iv. 8.

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion." -- Ps. xxvii. 5.

Trouble without, peace within; the Christian *ought* to expect his share of the first, and ought to pray for and also to expect the promised gift of the second. There is not only real safety, but the *sense* of safety for those whom God takes into His pavilion and hides there in the time of trouble. May He enable us to experience this, so that we may not be distressed though we may be troubled on every side. The remembrance that Jesus has loved us, and even now loves us, may well banish from our sky many a cloud, and if He deigns to lift up the light of His countenance on us, as He often does when outward troubles surround His people, our complaints will be turned, like David's, into songs of joy and praise, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" But it is not by brooding upon our sorrows that we shall arrive at this conclusion. It can only be when, with single purpose of heart, we can say, like the Psalmist again in this beautiful Psalm, "*One* thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple."

"O Lord, I would delight in Thee,
And on Thy care depend;
To thee in every trouble flee,
My best, my only Friend."

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October 10.

"O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me." -- Psalm cxxxix. 1.

It is only those who have their "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" by the blood of the Lamb, that can face this truth. It is only those who have cast themselves and their sins at the foot of the cross, that can venture to approach Him whose "eyes are as a flame of fire." David had thus come to God in faith, and therefore he shrinks not from the awful thought of the eye that was ever upon him, but rather delights in contemplating the omniscience of the Lord, "how precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God." "Search me, O God, and know my heart." I observe that he does not set forth merely in a general way the grand truth that God sees all things, he brings it home to himself (and here lies the lesson for me), "Thou hast searched *me*, and known *me*." Ah, what a proneness there is to escape from this application! How ready am I to forget the eye that searches and knows *me*, and to turn to the thought of His dealings with others; or to be so solicitous as to what *men* may think of my conduct, that I am not sufficiently heedful of my state of heart before God.

"Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy holy name through Christ our Lord. Amen."

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October 11.

"I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my head out of my sight. And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord: Thou art a mighty prince among us," &c. -- Gen. xxiii. 4-6.

All Abraham's wealth could not make this man of faith forget his true position upon earth: it belonged not to him; he belonged not to it. In the eyes of men he was a "mighty prince;" in his own eyes he was a stranger and a sojourner, seeking as his only earthly possession a "possession of a burying place." Oh, that I may be enabled to remember, like Abraham, that I have nothing here which I can call my own, except that last resting place to be taken possession of when I shall cease to be a stranger and a sojourner! May I seek to have treasure in heaven. Alas! how many of those who are richest in this world are poorest *there*, and have nothing either for time or eternity but the possession of a burying place! In a very few years the distinctions which here separate men shall cease for them for ever; the mighty prince and the poor beggar shall stand alike empty and bare before their God; those who have had "their portion in this life," be it little or great, will be alike deprived of their *all* then, while the man of faith, who was content to pass through life as a stranger, will enter on his only real inheritance, his eternal home! Grant that this may be my portion, O Lord!

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

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October 12.

“Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

-- Peter iv. 19.

To learn how to *suffer*, this is no easy lesson. Nature rebels at the thought of suffering, and stoical pride has its own way of facing it which is *not* God’s way; and so the difficulty remains unconquered, til the afflicted one lifts his eye to Calvary, and learns of Him who was meek and lowly in heart how to “*suffer according to the will of God.*” One look to the Cross, one view of the bleeding Lamb of God will better enable us to bear our sorrows than all the teachings of philosophy. Let us look at his wounds, and remember that “He was wounded for *our* transgressions;” let us consider how His bodily sufferings were but a faint image of the travail of His soul, and remember that it was “the chastisement of *our* peace that was laid upon him;” and we shall find our own pains lighter because our hearts will be then raised higher, and filled with an object of surpassing glory which may well make us account our own affliction light! To Him let us “commit the keeping of our souls in well-doing;” our “faithful Creator” will not allow us to be tried beyond measure. Faithful is He to all His promises, and there is one which affliction makes especially *our own*, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.”

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October 13.

"No man cometh to the Father but by me." -- John xiv. 6.

Blessed be Thy name, O Lord, that *Thou art the way!* Had we been told that any human priest or prophet was to be our Mediator with the Father, how few of the sons of men would ever have been saved! None but *Jesus* can have both the power of Divinity and the sympathy of humanity needful to succour and save poor sinners. None but Jesus can have "pity on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way," and at the same time be strong to redeem. None so near as Jesus to hear the faintest sigh of the returning penitent; none so divinely patient as Jesus, to bear with all the wanderings and follies and ignorance of even the best of His own disciples. "No man cometh to the Father but by me;" therefore we may believe that wherever there is a tear of repentance, His Holy Spirit has caused it to flow; wherever there is a feeble effort to return to God, He is the Author of it; and how encouraging is it to think that He is ever ready to perfect His own work! O blessed Saviour, suffer us not to forget the extent of our high privilege, nor to be slothful in drawing near to the Father through this living way, this *only way!*

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October 14.

"Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another." --Galatians v. 26.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." -- Philippians ii. 3.

How much of what the world worships as *glory* would be far more fitly called "*vain glory*"? It is the praise of those whose praise is often worth nothing, and is sometimes worse than blame; and yet strange as it is, men who ought to know better too often look to this rather than to the praise of God. How can we free our souls from this contemptible weakness? Let us look at the Apostle's cure; let us see how he points upwards, away from man's vain strife and praise and blame, and calls us to aspire after a high example with a high and single aim, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" If such a mind were indeed ours, how little would "vain glory" influence us. How high-minded would we become, and yet how deeply, intensely humble-minded! This is a combination only to be thus attained. The evil is that we, like the Corinthians, measure ourselves by ourselves, and compare ourselves with ourselves, instead of rising, as our Lord would have us do, to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

"O let Thy grace perform its part,
And let contention cease;
And shed abroad in every heart
Thine everlasting peace!

Thus chastened, cleansed, entirely Thine,
A flock by Jesus led,
The sun of holiness shall shine
In glory on each head."