

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.

September 29.

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." --John xv. 4.

Our Saviour has made His own works in nature our teachers, and how powerfully do they bring home to us the truths He reveals! We see a fresh, green, living branch with its fair clusters, and we at once perceive that it is by its connexion with the stem that it is so flourishing. Again, we behold a miserable, sapless, torn-off branch; showers may fall, sunbeams may shine on it, but the dews of heaven and the fatness of earth are alike in vain; its leaves are withered, its stem is parched, blackened, shrivelled - and as for grapes, we might as well look for them upon dry sticks; the branch abides not any longer on the sap-giving, life-giving vine, and of such it is said, "men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." The finger of Jesus has pointed to this; He has said, "The branch cannot bear fruit; *no more can ye*, except ye abide in me." Lord, may Thy word sink into my heart. O keep me abiding where alone I can safely abide!

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"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." -- Heb. ix. 22.

It is in vain to try to explain the Jewish service, except by viewing it as typical of the great sacrifice of Christ once to be offered. It was a dreadful and bloody service. On all sides slaughtered victims met the eyes, and their groans filled the ears of the worshippers; blood, blood was everywhere seen; the altar, the sacred vessels, the gorgeous garments of the priests, the assembled crowd of offerers -- were all sprinkled with those dark red stains; and what was the meaning of all this? must it not have been to them a constant and most impressive lesson of their guilt before a most holy God in whose eyes their life was forfeit, and of the need of an atonement by the life of another? In obedience to His express command, they offered their sacrifice, and trusted that their souls would be washed by "*better sacrifices* than these."