

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 8.

“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.”
--Ps. lxxiii. 1.

“It is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God,
that I may declare all thy works.” --Ps. lxxxiii. 28.

The psalmist begins his history of the sore temptation which befell him, and his deliverance from it, by telling, first of all, the conclusion to which he had arrived, that we may with him plant our foot on the rock when we look around us on the stormy billows, where, but for God’s helping grace, we too might have been well-nigh wrecked amidst the darkness. “*Truly God is good to Israel.*” -- good in Himself -- good in His dealings, -- good especially to His own Israel, in giving them the only lasting benefit in the prosperity of the wicked; “as a dream when one awaketh, so O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image!” If temporal prosperity were indeed best for God’s people, He would give it to them; but we may see how He estimates it by observing how often His chosen ones are left in poverty, sickness, and sorrow; nay, how His own dear Son spent His life as a man of sorrows upon earth! This is the conclusion of the whole matter, -- Lord, enable me to bind it to my heart, -- “*It is good for me to draw near to God.*”

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September 9.

“And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.”
-- Luke x. 5.

This teaches us in what spirit Christ would have us to carry on the intercourse of social life; a spirit of love and goodwill, bringing peace to all within our reach. Therefore, when brought into contact with others, and by the providence of God called to mingle in society, let me set this ever before my mind and strive to bring peace, the peace of God, “into whatsoever house I enter.” Visiting one’s friends would become a *holy* employment if conducted more in this spirit. Let it be my resolution to make every visit an occasion of prayer for that house and all in it; it may be that it is for this very end that I am brought to it, and led to take an interest in its inmates, and they in me; this thought would elevate our intercourses with each other, and enable us to edify each other, and to seek the glory of God in our daily conversation. The word, “Peace be to this house,” includes much; it is not the peace of an unawakened state, it is the peace of a true reconciliation with God that we would seek and pray for; may He who is the Prince of peace make us messengers of His peace!

“May He by whose kind care we meet
Send His good Spirit from above,
Make our communications sweet,
And cause our hearts to burn with love!”

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September 10.

“Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.”

--Ps. lxxvii. 4, 5.

He who uttered these lamentations was one who had sounded the very depths of human sorrow; and when he begins his strain by telling of the firm standing place he had reached, we listen to him with the more interest when he points out the path by which he had crossed this dreadful Slough of Despond. Long and dark had been the midnight conflict of his soul; and yet the sleepless misery of those hours was no proof he was not a child of God, though for a time he was reduced to the bitter cry. “Will the Lord cast off for ever?” It was by the remembrance of God’s former mercies that he was at last led to a clear view of present mercies still existing for him. He considered the days of old, rich in records of the wonderful works of his God even in those early times, and for us in these last days of the Church how much richer! He meditated on all the way in which God had led His people; he found his faith strengthened; he saw how God’s mighty power had been exerted in miracles of love, and how God’s love had wrought miracles of power, and with his confidence and faith restored, he tells us, “I cried unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me.”

“The billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky;
Out of the depths to thee I call,
My fears are great, my strength is small.

“Oh Lord, the pilot’s part perform,
And guarded and guide me through the storm;
Defend me from each threatening ill,
Control the waves, say, ‘Peace, be still!’”

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September 11.

"Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. " -- Heb. x. 21, 22.

"Let us draw *near*," -- let me draw near, -- not stand afar off, as one doubtful of acceptance, or ignorant of the way, or held back by the fear which "hath torment." Let me draw near because my Father in heaven bids me do so; let me approach as a humble little child in obedience to His voice. Let me draw near, for He has Himself taken away the obstacles that stood in the way of access, -- He has opened a way, He has granted a guide, even the Spirit of prayer and supplication. Let me come casting away self; self-confidence, self-righteousness, self in every form; and come through the High Priest alone, united to Him by a living faith which is the only ground for *full assurance* of faith. Let me draw near "with a true heart:" He reads the heart; ignorant, weak, and foolish it may be, but it *must* be a *true* heart, not *false* or guileful, for it must be "sprinkled from an evil conscience" in the blood of Jesus, and "washed with pure water" by the Spirit of regeneration.

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September 12.

"According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it."

-- Ex. xxv. 9.

"Priests that offer gifts according to the law, who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." --Heb. viii. 4, 5.

It was of the greatest importance that Moses should follow closely the pattern set before him and the instructions given to him; for his work down to its minutest details was a series of types designed to instruct the people; and we may believe that the meaning as well as the outward form was all shown him in the mysterious pattern revealed to him on the Mount. No such minute instructions for the building of God's house and the celebration of His worship are given to the Christian Church, -- because our service is no longer typical but real; but for us also there is a Pattern on the Mount, and when we ask "Lord, what wouldst thou have *me* to do? He tells us, -- "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked."

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September 13.

"I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praise of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us. " --Isa. lxiii.7.

Christian, if you take this as the measure of your thanksgiving, and resolve to praise the Lord "according to all that the Lord hath bestowed" on you, how soon will you be forced to cry, "I know not the numbers thereof! If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered!" Begin with the least and lowest of His benefits, think of last night's peaceful rest, of to-day's peaceful awaking, -- think of your own existence up to this hour, preserved in His kind providence, through a hundred dangers known and unknown, through journeys, -- in sickness when many prayers have been offered for you; -- have you thanked Him? or have you been like the nine lepers? Then go deeper and think of soul preservations -- the Bible in your hand -- Christian education -- faithful preaching -- all given to bring home to your heart the Gift of gifts, Jesus Christ in you, the hope of glory. Thus the mention of one mercy leads to thoughts of another and another, stirring up all the heart to praise; as one circle spreads beyond another when a stone is cast into a lake, dimpling the clear still waters as it sinks deeply down, till at last the widened rings stretch to the very margin, and the surface trembles from shore to shore.

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"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." -- Eph. ii. 7.

This is the future of the dear children of God. This is what the ages to come, the long ages of eternity, will show them. All that we can know here of the exceeding riches of His grace is as nothing compared to that which is yet to be revealed, but if we have indeed experienced any measure of this knowledge, we may look upon it as a foretaste of that which He has praised, of His free grace, to give hereafter. Most elevating is the thought of the high destiny of God's people. It should raise the mind above the engrossing cares and petty trifles which too often overwhelm it. It should fill the Christian heart with ardent longings to live worthy of so high a vocation; and in the hour of sorrow it should be able to afford the highest and holiest of consolations to the afflicted spirit. There is the greatest practical value in such hopes as these, for the more we endeavour to realize the riches of the spiritual world, the more pure will be our aims, and the more earnest our endeavours to live to the glory of Him who has so loved us.

"A little longer ere life true, immortal,
(Not this our shadowy life) will be thine own;
And thou shalt stand where winged archangels worship
And trembling bow before the Great White Throne."