

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.

December 8.

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved."
-- Ps. lxii. 5, 6.

Much as we may love and thankfully trust our friends, there is a point beyond which no earthly love can help us. Human affection cannot save the soul; it is not man that can lift from the sinner the burden of sin; it is not man that can be to me "my Rock and my Salvation." God has many ways of teaching us to wait on Himself only. Sometimes, He suffers us to be disappointed in those whom we have trusted, as the Psalmist seems here to have been when he says, "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." Sometimes, we are taught the lesson by being made to suffer sore sickness, and it may be in the long weary hours of midnight pain that we are led to look to God alone for help. And often, oh, how often does He teach us this by taking away the props to which we have been fondly clinging, like ivy to mouldering walls; --the "tottering fence" gives way, and we fall wounded to the dust, till He trains us and raises us up, and leads us to cleave to the living Rock; and then, when He is our defence, we may say with David, "I shall not be moved."

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December 9.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."
-- Rom. xv. 4.

He who wrote this Holy Book knew the heart of man; He knew the needs of His Church in all time to come. Thus, what was true of the Scriptures in St. Paul's day is as true for us in these later times. The things contained in the Scriptures were written not for the Jews only--not for the early Church only--but for *us*. Not a word too much, not a word too little, is in the Book of books, this standing miracle. It meets the wants of God's people in every age, and in every clime. In human literature we find no such universal adaptation. The poems which are the delight of one age are incomprehensible to another; the songs of the East are neither beautiful nor wise to the Western world; and the finest literature of both East and West would be utterly unintelligible to an Esquimaux or a Hottentot; *things written for his learning* long ages ago in the wonderful Book of his God; and the Name above every name, the precious name of Jesus, would thrill the hearts of these strangers from north and south, with our own, in a sympathy which no other word, no other name, could have power to call forth.

"Nor shall Thy spreading gospel rest
Till through the world Thy truth has run;
Till Christ has all the nations blest
That see the light, or feel the sun."

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December 10.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind." -- 1 Corinthians xiii. 4.

Here we have set before us the two chief aspects of charity; it is both *passive* and *active*; let us strive to possess it in both forms. Let us learn to *suffer long*, to bear meekly, to be *not easily* provoked, because of the love or charity that fills our hearts, even towards him who provokes us. May we seek to have in us the mind that was in Christ Jesus! May we learn patience from His patience, and forgiving meekness from Him who forgave His murderers; "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Let us deal faithfully with ourselves, and suppress, by God's grace assisting us, not the angry manner alone, nor the angry word, but the angry, uncharitable, unloving *thought* in its first rising. Let us not seek to excuse it by saying, "I was sorely provoked;" the meekness that cannot stand provocation is no meekness at all; "for what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Charity is *kind* as well as long-suffering; kind in heart, kind in word, kind in look, kind in action. Not kind on the surface only, with the varnish of mere politeness, but kind at heart, because full of the *principle of kindness, which is love*.

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December 11.

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.” -- 1 Cor. xiv. 10.

Yes, there are many kinds of voices, and it is not for us to shut our ears and turn from all but *one* kind; we ought to try to find good, as the bee finds honey, in all varieties of flowers; he who refuses to do so, and listens only to those who agree with him, will become a narrow-minded, one-sided character. There are many kinds of voices in the Church; voices of hope, or grief, of joy, of sadness; there are voices that sing as they soar, rising like the lark to the gates of heaven in their lofty strain; and there are voices that descend to earth and speak of humble, simple, practical matters, “none of them is without signification,” could we but listen aright. And in the world as well as in the Church there are many kinds of voices and teachings for the thoughtful mind, from which we may draw much good if we will. Only let us take to ourselves the “precious stone that turneth all to gold,” the desire to do all to God’s glory! Surely the Christian can have no better direction for his guidance than that of the Apostle Paul, “Finally brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things.*”

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December 12.

“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” -- Ps. li. 7.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” --Isa. I. 18.

The promise in Isaiah is like the answer to David’s prayer; the Psalmist asks to be washed “whiter than snow,” the Lord, by His prophet, promises thus to wash the returning, repenting sinner. Perhaps snow is chosen not only to set forth the perfect whiteness of the washed soul, but to intimate that it is from heaven this purity comes, and from heaven alone. No painter can produce a whiteness like that of snow; no sinner can wash himself clean in the sight of God. “The rain cometh down, and the snow *from heaven*,” the cleansing, the washing of the sin-stained heart can only come from above. O Lord, do Thou by Thy Holy Spirit, so apply to my heart and conscience the cleansing and purifying blood of Jesus Christ, that I may be in Thy sight whiter than snow! not a “whited sepulchre,” only outwardly clean, but pure as snow is pure, *all through*, even in Thy holy eyes, through the perfect work of my Saviour!

“I bring my guilt to Jesus,
To wash its crimson stains,
White in his blood most precious,
Till not a spot remains.”

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December 13.

“At the commandment of the Lord, the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched; as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents.” --Numbers ix. 18.

May my eye be directed simply and truly to Thee, O Lord, for guidance in the journey of life! Thou hast said, “Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.” Give the singleness of heart in seeking Thy guidance, and faith to follow the path to which Thou dost direct me, whether it is pleasing to me or not. Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, no visible cloud arises nor rests to direct Thy children, but there is a guidance for all who rightly seek it, in the word of Thy truth, the lamp to our feet, the light to our path. And even in the affairs of our daily life there is a guidance; His providence opens up or closes our way with no doubtful meaning to the simple heart that sincerely asks to do His will. May I learn to watch wisely these gracious tokens, and in doing so, and in humbly asking to be thus directed, may I cast my burden of care for the future entirely upon the Lord, for it is His will that His children should find peace in trusting themselves and their way to Him who careth for them.

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December 14.

“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.” -- I Cor. i. 27-29.

God sees not as man sees; God judges not as man judges. Let us seek to have our judgment of men brought more into conformity with that of God; and let us beware of esteeming that kind of “wisdom of the wise,” which God says, “*I will destroy*,” above the true, the heavenly wisdom, which is said to be “a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her.” There is a wisdom which is for this world and ends with this world; it cannot go with a man beyond the grave. When he has left this earth, and entered on the great eternity beyond, his admirers may erect monuments to him as they will, and talk as they will of his immortal fame; but alas! what can this do for him there? Perhaps the men of his day were praising Dives as a very wise man, as well as a very rich one, and all the while he was lifting up his eyes “in torment.” How encouraging is it for poor, humble, unintellectual Christians to think that God looks not upon them as man looks. He may have a place for them in Heaven, though they are little thought of on earth, if they have but received into their hearts “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”