

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.

July 1.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."—Romans viii. 26.

What deep need have we that the Spirit of God should help us, surrounded as we are by infirmities at all times, and especially in our attempts to pray! "Sins, negligences, and ignorances hinder us in our approaches to God; we know neither what we should pray for, nor how we ought to pray; but, blessed be God, we are not left to grope our way in this darkness of nature, the Holy Spirit himself not only invites us by the word of promise, He Himself condescends to be our Guide, and "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." We should not rest content in prayer without this heavenly help; we should ask and *expect* Him to aid us whether in public or private prayer; He is not a God afar off, He is ever willing to assist us, He often *draws* us by breathing desires after God into our minds; oh, let us beware lest we *quench* the Spirit by inattention to that voice of love! Let us pour out our hearts to God whenever He breathes the wish upon our souls. Let us pray for ourselves or others at whatever moment the thought or desire to do so comes upon our minds. Even then He may be waiting to be gracious, and to answer the prayer He has Himself inspired.

"Oh, pray—pray on, ye souls that weep

Some loved one dead in sins;

'Tis God that prompts those pleadings deep

Before His work begins!"

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July 2.

"Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I also am known." —1 Cor. xiii. 12.

In how many things do we feel that in this world we see through a glass darkly! "With regard to the ways of God we see darkly; His providences perplex us—

"He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm;"

and seems often to say to us, while we stand amazed at His doings, "Be still, and know that I am God." And when we read this verse in the light of the whole chapter, I think we must feel that, not only in regard to the ways of God, but as respects the ways of *men* also, we see darkly—very darkly sometimes, in this world, and therefore *need charity!* There is great danger of judging wrongly and harshly, if we judge our brethren, for "we know *in part.*" "Judge not, that ye be not judged." "We see through a glass darkly *now*, but it shall not be always so. Our present state should make us wish for the future when there will be no darkness; but while seeing through the glass on earth, grant me, O Lord, faith to trust in Thee, hope to look forward to seeing Thee, and fervent charity towards all men!

"When this passing world is done,
"When has sunk yon glaring sun,
"When I stand with saints in glory,
Looking o'er life's finish'd story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe."

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July 3.

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

—Luke ii. 19.

"While the shepherds made known abroad all that was told them concerning the infant Saviour, his mother kept these things in her heart. Both did right: the shepherds were called to bear witness *at the time* to the wonders they had seen; Mary's was a time of silence and patient waiting on her Lord, who was also her Son, till He should reveal Himself. Never had woman so much to ponder in her heart as she had, for never was woman so highly favoured; but the favour shewn did not turn her from her simple course, and from the quiet fulfilling of her duties. It was not for her to become a preacher; she had to minister to an infant, and that infant her Lord! "Well might she *ponder* that great mystery of godliness! The Lord gives various duties to His people: some are to preach—others are to ponder. May I seek to know His will, and to do it, whatever He may call me to. May I so meditate on the marvellous work of God in sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, that my heart may be filled with love, and praise; and, if not called to declare His wonders abroad among men, like the shepherds, may I, by my whole life and conversation, declare that I have received Christ the Lord as a Saviour born to redeem me.

"Yet, Lord, Thou wilt my dwelling share,

And for Thyself a couch prepare,

To rest for ever in my heart,

That I from Thee may never part."

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July 4.

"Glory ye in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord."—Psalm cv. 3.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say unto you rejoice."—Phil. iv. 4.

The hearts of those that *seek* the Lord are called upon to rejoice—how much more the hearts of those that *find* Him? Who should rejoice if not they? "Who has so much to make them rejoice? It is true they have also many a time much to make them weep; but the command, "rejoice in the Lord *alway*" stands for them as steadfast as any of the ten; and He gives no commandment which He does not mean us to obey, and which He will not give us strength to obey when we ask Him for it. Hundreds, nay, thousands, of His people have been enabled to rejoice in the Lord when they had nothing else to rejoice in; and if we would not seek so much to find our joys apart from Him, we might find it easier to obey this command, and to rejoice when He calls us to do so; but we too often look for happiness far away from Him—the things on which we found our joys perish; and when we would again open our hearts to our heavenly joy, we find, perhaps, to chasten us for our sin, He has withdrawn Himself and is gone! And thus we learn that we need the work of His own Spirit to make us rejoice in Him, for the "fruits of the Spirit are love, *joy*, and peace." Keep close to Christ if you would share His joy!

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July 5.

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children."—Psalm xc. 16.

There seems to be a contrast here between these two clauses—the prayer for the *work*, and that for the *glory*. "We pray for a present work; we ask that the work of the Lord may appear now to us "Thy servants;" and we pray that the glory, the full accomplishment of the work, may come hereafter—"Let Thy glory appear unto their children." Not that these two are inconsistent, or that we do not also wish the glory to appear to us, and the work to continue during future generations; but it seems to me that there is here a lesson of patience, the prayer of a patient spirit willing to go on with the work, the great work of promoting God's kingdom, even though the perfect accomplishment of it may never be seen in our day, and the glory may appear only in a future generation. How often in the missionary work is this the case! "We ought to take encouragement from this verse to pray for *the work*, and go on with it hopefully, though we may never in this life see the glory!

"Waft, waft ye winds His story,
And you ye waters roll,
Till like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole.
"Till o'er our ransom'd nature,
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss return to reign."

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July 6.

"Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." — Psalm ciii. 20.

Human beings are not God's only servants, He has hosts of pure unfallen angels to do His will, with all the excellent strength of free spirits, that have never been enslaved by sin like ourselves. For anything that we can know to the contrary, there may be as many ranks of spiritual beings *above* us, as there are ranks of inferior animals *below* us in the grand scale of creation. And these elder sons of our heavenly Father, created long ages before Adam had life given to him, have been going on without wavering in their allegiance, doing His will, all through the time of the wonderful history of man's fall by sin, and redemption by Christ. They are not indifferent to what passes on earth; "the angels desire to look into" these things, and no doubt they sympathise in the progress of Christ's kingdom, for we are told that there is joy in heaven "in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." David in this psalm calls upon the angels that excel in strength to join in praising God, as if he felt that the tongues of men and of angels were all too weak to utter worthy notes of thanksgiving to so good and glorious a God.

"Speak, ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels; for ye behold Him, and with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle His throne rejoicing!"

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July 7.

"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it."—Sol. Song viii. 13.

There are those who in the upper sanctuary hearken continually to His voice, angels and spirits of just men made perfect, who dwell in His presence for ever. And there are those on earth—blessed ones indeed—who dwell in such close communion with their Lord, that they too seem ever to hear His voice; for He is willing to reveal Himself to His own people, and the cloud that shuts Him out from shining on the soul, is a cloud of man's own making, even unbelief, and worldly-mindedness and folly. He speaks in various ways; in His word, by His ordinances, by His providences; and His sheep know His voice, the voice of Him that spake as never man spake. Lord, this is my prayer: Cause me to hear that voice, thou that dwellest in the gardens where the trees of righteousness grow ; make me as one of the "*companions*" who hearken to Thee, for the voices by which Thou makest Thyself known are all silent to me, unless Thou openest my ears, and causest me to hear Thee!"

"Yet could I hear Him once again

As I have heard of old,

Methinks He should not call in vain

His wanderer to the fold !"