

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 8.

"For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." —1 Cor. xv. 3.

Our progress in the Christian life is to be estimated, not so much by the number of new ideas and truths that we acquire, as by the increasingly manifested power and presence in us of a foundation-truth like this, "Christ died for our sins." Were we like the Apostle, found "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," we might expect that assuredly the life of Jesus would be manifested more in us. In this great truth so many other truths lie wrapped up! It is by contemplating this wonderful death of Christ the Lord, that we learn the holiness of God, His hatred of sin, His marvellous love to man, the wisdom of His great plan of redemption, and the great eternal glory of Christ Himself, who became our Redeemer. And while we learn these things concerning God and His ways, what an awful lesson do we also learn of the exceeding evil of sin! Can anything so convince us of the guilt of man as the death of the Son of God for our sins? Therefore, well might the Apostle, in his teaching, deliver this great truth "first of all."

"By that rich and precious blood,
That hath made our peace with God,
Jesus, to Thy feet we flee,
Jesus, we will cling to Thee!"

July 9.

"But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid." —John vi. 20.

To the tempest-tossed disciples who loved their Lord, there could not be a more comforting word than this; to the wicked, in their distresses, there cannot be a more terrible one. The presence of his Saviour is the believer's strongest consolation in his hour of trial; one look from his Lord reassures his fainting spirit; "*It is I,*" is equivalent to "*it is well,*" for with the Lord on his side, all must be well to the eye of faith. "When Jesus says, "It is I," He calls us to look away from second causes, and see His hand working, even though it be in afflicting us; and when we have fully recognised this, and have felt that it is not in anger, but for our profit that He so deals with us, the bitterness is taken away, and a sweet sense of His presence makes the spirit tender, humble, and lowly before Him. Sickness and suffering are no longer felt to be intolerable evils; even sore bereavement does not overwhelm the soul that feels the Saviour to be a *very present* help.

But to the unbeliever, this "*it is I*" is the very element of terror in his hour of suffering, for he hears in it the voice of an offended God. O Saviour, may we so know Thee, and so love Thee, that in all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, no voice may be so welcome to our hearts as this, "*It is I!*"

"O Saviour, then in all my need

Be near, be near to me!

And let my soul by steadfast faith

Find life and heaven in Thee."

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July 10.

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."—Job xiv. 4.

Here lies the secret of the deep-rooted and widespread disease of *sin*. It cleaves to every child of Adam, the first sinful man; but when the blessed Jesus became man to save us, he was born of a virgin, and "in him was no sin." Therefore, we may rejoice in knowing that our load of sins is borne by a perfect Saviour; His righteousness is a complete righteousness, and His atoning death for our sakes was the death of the only acceptable sacrifice, a "Lamb without blemish and without spot." How marvellous is the wisdom that devised such a plan of salvation! How wonderful the love that carried it into execution! Well might the Apostle say, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Teach us, good Lord, to meditate, to wonder, and to adore, and may the souls redeemed at such a price be more and more filled with Thy love, and devoted to Thy service!

"What thanks I owe Thee, and what love,

A boundless, endless store,

Shall echo through the realms above,

When time shall be no more !"

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July 11.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."— 1 John v. 21.

Let us pray, "Lord, keep us from idols ! Teach us not to love *less* those whom thou hast given us, but to love Thee *more!* Suffer us not to worship the gifts rather than the Giver! Above all, keep us from making an idol of *self*, the most tyrannical of all idols, hateful alike to God and to man!"

How prone is the heart to idolatry! much as we blame the Israelites, and marvel at their repeated returns to the worship of one base idol after another, we are in no condition ourselves to throw the first stone at them—we whose hearts have so often turned aside after false gods. The Lord our God is a jealous God; He will not suffer us to worship any idol while professing to serve Him alone. He chastened His people of old as often as they went thus astray, and in very faithfulness He chastens His people now! How many a mother can point to little graves, and say, "There lie my idols! "and how many a saint in heaven is now blessing God, that even by sorrows like these, He led them to worship Himself alone !

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee!

"Then shall my walk be close with God;
Calm and serene my frame,
Then clearer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb."

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July 12.

"Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."— Ps. iv. 4.

"My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips ; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." — Ps. lxxiii. 5, 6.

There are few who have not had some experience of wakeful nights, at least there are few who have reached middle age without this knowledge ; and the Psalmist, who gives us thoughts for all seasons, has not forgotten to provide for the night hours also. He tells us how he employed his sleepless moments, praising his God with joyful lips in the darkness; and how sweetly would the night pass with us if thus employed, when sickness or anxiety drives our slumbers away; how would it calm the mind, and still the feverish restlessness of the hour if we could thus rise above earth to our God, and think over all His mercies, and sing His praise in heart if not with our voice! But another duty is presented to the wakeful mind, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Night is the time for thought, for solemn searching of our souls before God, when freed from the distractions of busy daylight; O may such moments be thus employed by me, and then, if deprived of sleep, I shall not need to repine, for the want will be more than compensated by the *rest* of the soul in God.

"In the mid silence of the voiceless night,
When chased by airy dreams the slumbers flee,
Whom in the darkness doth my spirit seek,
O God, but Thee!"

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July 13.

"When the fruit is brought forth (marg. is ripe), immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."—Mark iv. 29.

Here we have a ray of heavenly light cast upon many dealings of God, which men are ready to call very dark. We see useful lives suddenly brought to a close; we see the Christian pastor taken away in the midst of a most important work; the Christian statesman removed from his place of high hope and promise for good; the Christian soldier falling before the fight was done, and perhaps, most mysterious of all to our natural sight, the faithful, tender, holy, Christian mother taken away from a large family of little ones whom she was leading straight to Jesus! and these things seem utter darkness to us till we consider not our *loss*, but their *gain*. They were taken away not when we needed them least, or could best spare them, but "when the fruit was brought forth." The Lord watches the progress of the seed He sowed, the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear; in some, the full corn presents so rich a harvest of beauty, that we dread the day of reaping! but He watches it, and even because of its ripeness, "when the fruit is brought forth, *immediately* he putteth in the sickle," and gathers it home, safely, surely, speedily home!

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July 14.

"Blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen."—Ps. lxxii. 19.

There is a glorious day yet before us, when this prayer, which is also a prophecy, shall be accomplished, and this earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord as it has never yet been. We ask not *how* this shall be; we simply believe, that because the Lord has said it, He will do it to His own eternal praise and glory. The thought is to the believer a source of unspeakable joy and comfort; such comfort, as it must have been to the Jewish believer of the elder Church, to look forward to a Saviour yet to be revealed, of whom the prophets spoke, and the typical services gave promise. And thus do we look for His second coming, which will make this sin-blighted world full of His glory; rejoicing in the thought that our Saviour, who was rejected and despised among men, will in that day reign as King of kings and Lord of lords in an inconceivably glorious kingdom, where all the prophecies shall be seen and known to be true, finding their full accomplishment in ways perhaps which we little dream of. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14.

"He shall reign from pole to pole

With illimitable sway;

He shall reign when as a scroll

Heaven and earth shall pass away!"