

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 15.

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." -- Hosea xi. 4.

"The love of Christ constraineth us." -- 2 Cor. v. 14.

Cords of *duty* are strong; bands of *self-interest* are powerful; but there are no cords or bands that draw a man like the bands of *love*. Therefore He who made us and knows our frame, calls them the "cords of a man." O let us never, when He puts His secret chain of love around our hearts, resist His drawings! Let us rather cry, "Draw me, we will run after thee." It is a fearful thought that there is such a thing as *resisting* the Spirit. He is the spirit of love, and it is by revealing to the soul the love of Christ that He draws men; but unbelief hardens the hearts of many against His sweetly constraining power, and the Saviour still says to the children of men, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." If we have been drawn to Him for the life of our souls, let us pray to be continually drawn on in the path of holy obedience. The love by which He at first constrained us must still constrain us all through our journey, that we, being daily touched with the Spirit of love, may daily live to His service.

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it!
Seal it for thy courts above"

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September 16.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." -- Matt. v. 4.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me...to comfort all that mourn." --Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

Who are the mourners that are "blessed?" it is not those who look to the world to comfort them, nor those who faint under their affliction and refuse any comfort. It is those who, in the mourning for sin or sorrow, *go to Jesus*, and find Him anointed of the Father to bless their souls with the only true comfort. Such mourners *shall* be comforted; if sin is the cause of their weeping, He will reveal to them the cleansing Fountain. If any of those varied sorrows which sin has brought upon men, make men mourn, He can comfort under these, too, by giving such a sense of His love as will strengthen them under every load of sorrow and heal every painful wound. If they have wandered from him and mourn over their backslidings, turning with weeping eyes to His mercy-seat, He knows how to comfort even under this grief, He brings back the lost, and turns the tears of godly sorrow into thanksgivings. Thus the Christian mourner is made to know His Lord in the blessed character of one who comforts; and in order to gain this knowledge, he may well be content to suffer with "those that mourn."

"'Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the Cross;
But the Saviour's love to know,
Sanctifying every loss."

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September 17.

"But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." --Psalm lxvi. 19, 20.

We think too little of the answers to our prayers. We rejoice in receiving them, but often fail to mark them as answers to our petitions; and yet is not every child of God surrounded by mercies, on which he may inscribe, "Received in answer to my prayer?" Are there not dear friends around us whose lives or health have been given back to us, when sentence of death seemed to have been passed upon them? And have not we still dearer blessings for which to praise Him in the great mercy that has answered our prayers for the conversion of the *souls* of those whom we love? Have we not besought His help in teaching children, in trying to comfort mourners, or in difficult duties which we feared to undertake, and God has heard us and attended to the voice of our prayers? but have we blessed Him for His mercy. O Lord, since thou teachest thy disciples to *pray*, teach them also to *praise* thee; and may they be watchful as to the answers of their petitions, that they may miss no occasion of giving thanks!

"To render thanks unto the Lord,
It is a comely thing;
And to thy name, O thou most high,
Due praise aloud to sing."

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September 18.

“At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. --Jer. xxxi. 1.

The family ties are of God's appointment. He would have us to cherish them not only as our best earthly blessings, but as types of high and heavenly things. He has given us the love of a Father to teach us His own love; and the love of dear brethren to teach us that of our Elder Brother above! He calls Himself the God of all the families of Israel; He it is who has thus united them in groups to travel to heaven together, if they are but found “walking in truth.” If it is His will that each of His people should care for the souls of others, surely it is by beginning with those *nearest* to them that they will best do this. Let us remember for our encouragement, that He is the God of *families*; and let us consider that he has laid it upon each of us to make the members of our own family the special objects of our prayers and holy endeavours *first of all*. They are given to us and we to them, that we may all help each other on to God.

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September 19.

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?” -- Mark vi. 3.

“Truly this man was the Son of God.” -- Mark xv. 39.

Yes, both these sayings were true! And herein lies the wonder of wonders, the mystery of mysteries. The carpenter, the man of lowly toil, gaining his daily bread in the sweat of his brow, the son of a humble mortal mother, following the humble employment of her husband, -- who is he that he should do “such mighty works?” O men of Nazareth, ye despised and rejected Him once, but the day will come for you, and for all His despisers, when ye will call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on you and hide you from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb! For *“truly this was the Son of God!”* We bow in deep reverence before His greatness, find in His humiliation the deepest cause of that reverence. We marvel and adore, as we behold the sight which the people of Nazareth scorned -- the son of Mary labouring as a carpenter! “My Lord and my God!” hast Thou stooped so low for me! And shall I not present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, unto Thee?

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September 20.

“There is nothing too hard for thee.” --Jer. xxxii. 17;
compare with ver. 26, 27.

Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, “Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me?” Thus the Lord answered Jeremiah by sending back to him his own words; he must not only confess with his mouth, but believe in his heart that there was “*nothing* too hard” for God. He was sorely perplexed by what seemed contradictions in the dealings of God; he saw the besiegers’ mounts round the city, and knew that the terrible word had gone out against his people, “Though ye fight with the Chaldeans ye shall not prosper;” yet, as if all had been in perfect security, he had been commanded to buy land for money and take witnesses. In his perplexity he turns to his God, with the strongest confession of trust in His glorious power; and the Lord leaves him not long in his difficulty; none ever trusted in Him and were confounded. He confirms the faith of His servant, reveals the judgment He was about to send on account of the sin of the people; but comforts the prophet by glorious promises of a future return from captivity, shadowed forth by this purchase of the field which seemed to Jeremiah so mysterious. May the words of the Lord instruct our wavering faith.

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September 21.

"When he was yet a long way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." --Luke xv. 20.

O how little men know the heart of their Father in heaven! How readily do they believe the lies of him who is the father of lies, when he would persuade them that God is -- what the evil one only is -- a *hard* master! Yet it is not for want of revelation of God's true character, that men are thus perverted. In both the early and the later dispensations, He has made Himself known not in His holiness only, but as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious," yea, and most merciful even when most righteous! None could dare, even in the early times of Jewish ordinances, to complain that the Lord had turned away their petition, or refused to receive their sacrifice when offered from a contrite heart; but much less now, when the love of God is manifested in Christ, can any man say, "I am cast out, when I come to Him." He hears the faintest cry of repentance, He beholds the returning sinner "while yet a great way off."