

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.

May 8.

"Teach me thy way, O Lord; unite my heart to fear thy name."—Ps. lxxxvi.
11.

"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty."—Hosea x. 2.

"No man can serve two masters."—Matt. vi. 24.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ; if any man love
the world, the love of the Father is not in him."—1 John ii. 15.

"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."—Exod. xx. 5.

If we would be the servants of God, we must serve Him with undivided hearts, and ceasing to listen to the voice of the tempter, we must give ourselves up to God alone. But here we find continually how deeply sin is rooted into our nature; the apostle says, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind," and as long as we live the strife will continue in a greater or less degree. Blessed be God we have the promise of His Holy Spirit to dwell in us and renew our wills, so that if Christ be in us, "the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." O Lord, do Thou thus; by Thy Holy Spirit, daily renew my heart, and enable me to give myself wholly to Thee, a living sacrifice, a "reasonable service!"

"Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with Thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,
 'Thy will be done.'
And when on earth I breathe no more,
The prayer, oft mix'd with sin before,
I'll sing upon a happier shore,
 'Thy will be done.'"

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May 9.

'I have declared my ways, and Thou heardest me; teach me Thy statutes.'—Ps. cxix. 26.

Here is the communion of the believing soul with God; here is true confession. The heart opens itself to its God, and declares, without guile, all its ways and its wanderings, under a very realising feeling of the presence and nearness of the heart-searching One, who is of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity." How needful is this confession! How blessed is the forgiveness that follows it! How does it lift the load from the heart, and restore peace to the conscience sprinkled with the atoning blood. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "*Faithful and just to forgive!*" these are wonderful words. Sinners might rather have expected that if forgiveness were named at all, it would have been joined with the words "merciful and compassionate," but no! He is faithful and just to the covenant by which, through His own great goodness, He has said, that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." With such encouragements, then, to confess our sins, let us not shrink from laying our souls open before Him and declaring our ways. He hears us, not to punish but to cleanse; and when once washed from our guilt, we may go on to ask a still further boon, and say, "Teach me Thy statutes."

"Proclaim salvation from the Lord,
For wretched dying men;
His hand has writ the sacred word
With an immortal pen."

May 10.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?"
—Eccles. i. 2.

"To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."—Rom. viii. 6.

The teaching of the apostle may throw some light upon the melancholy teaching of the Preacher, with his sad burden, "vanity of vanities." To be carnally minded, seeking the things under the sun as the portion of our souls, is *death*, and therefore is felt to be *vanity*, even by the unrenewed heart, which does not know the secret of its own deep and unsatisfied longings ; it feels the want, but knows not why it feels it; and the larger that heart and mind is, the greater seems the void, as an empty palace seems more desolate than an empty cottage. Again we have a new thought in connexion with this, in the following verse of St Paul's reasoning, "because the carnal mind is *enmity* against God;" how can there be anything but *death*, where there is enmity against Him who is the *Life*? But to be "spiritually minded is life and peace;" here we have the cure. Therefore, the more spiritually minded we become, the less shall we be "subject to vanity," for we shall have life and peace in a living Saviour.

"Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast till Christ we know
Is vanity and toil.
But where the Lord has planted grace
And made His glories known,
There fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone!"

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May 11.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—Matt. xi. 29, 30.

It is by learning of Jesus, and by becoming, like Him, meek and lowly in heart, that those who labour and are heavy laden find rest to their souls. They not only find rest from the burden of their sins, which they cast upon Him, but they find another kind of rest, in the change of character produced by taking His yoke and His light burden, the meek and lowly heart. A proud spirit can never be a partaker of Christ's rest, because it does not stoop to His yoke, and the very nature of His rest requires in the receiver a Christlike spirit. How truly do we see in life that it is the meek and lowly ones, and not the proud, who enjoy rest in their souls. Grant unto me, Lord, Thine own grace of meekness! contrary as it is to all the maxims of a proud overbearing world, it yet wins the victory; for by being humble, thankful, and contented with God's will, the meek "*inherit the earth,*" even now, in their passage to the kingdom of heaven!

"Lowly, my heart, be lowly!
So God shall dwell with thee;
It is the meek and patient
Who shall exalted be.
Deep in the valley rest
The Spirit's gifts most holy;
And they who seek are blest,
Therefore, my heart, be lowly!"

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May 12.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John xvi. 33.

Jesus would have His disciples to be possessed of the great blessing of peace. He does not desire that they should *remain unsatisfied*, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,"—always in the attitude of eager, restless seekers, striving after a peace which they never attain. He has spoken words of life and truth for the very purpose of bringing His disciples to the knowledge of truth and the enjoyment of peace in Him ; and they *need* this peace, for "in the world," He says, "ye shall have tribulation;" and it is only by a close, life-giving, *peace-giving* union with their Lord, that they can, *in Him*, overcome the world. Peace *with* the world is not the Christian's peace; he looks higher for his soul's satisfying rest; and when he reads the blessed words of Jesus—the promises made by Him to those who *abide* in Him—the assurance that their prayers in His name shall be granted—the gift of the Comforter promised, and the love of the Father himself revealed—he knows and understands how it was that Jesus spoke these things to strengthen His followers amidst the world's tribulation, by a peace in Him which the world could neither give nor take away.

"Though faith and hope are often tried,

We ask not, need not, aught beside;

So safe, so calm, so satisfied,

The souls that cling to Thee!"

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May 13.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."—John i. 14.

What a mystery is here! " *Great* is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh." May I reverently adore and admire the wondrous revelation of God made known to us in Christ. May I contemplate the Saviour as God and as man, till I behold something of His glory, not like the highly-favoured apostle, with the bodily eye, but with the eye of a clear and firm faith. May I learn to meditate on His glory, for what subject can be so worthy of devout meditation? He does not hide Himself from us; no, He rather invites to a closer and nearer view of His glorious character and work, for He, when on earth, "dwelt among us,"—"full of grace and truth;" the wonderful parenthesis which separates this verse reveals to us, that it was not alone the glory of Jesus which His apostles beheld—not only the glory of a perfect human character, but the glory of Divinity— "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

"Sweeter sounds than music knows

Charm me in Emmanuel's name;

All her hopes my spirit owes

To His birth, and cross, and shame.

When He came the angels sung,

'Glory be to God on high!'

Lord, unloose my stammering tongue—

Who should louder sing than I?"

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May 14.

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."— Sol. Song vi. 3.

If we can in any measure adopt the language of Christ's Church and say this for ourselves, why do we not *rejoice* more in our Lord? Why do we go mourning if *Christ* is ours? Why do thoughts of present troubles and past trials weigh so heavily upon our spirits? There is a strength and a love in Christ of which we have but caught a faint glimpse—let us seek a fuller view. The apostle speaks of being "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Why may not this rejoicing be ours if Christ is ours? Let us not rest in a dull, cold, apathetic state, forfeiting the rich inheritance of *present* as well as future happiness which the favour of God secures to His believing children. "All things are yours,"—"things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!"

"Soul, then know thy full salvation,

Rise o'er sin, and fear, and care,

Joy to find in every station,

Something still to do or bear.

Think what Spirit dwells within thee!

Think what Father's smiles are thine!

Think that Jesus died to win thee—

Child of heaven, canst thou repine?"

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