

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.

April 22.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."

—Phil. ii. 9, 10.

There are many names which the world exalts—there is one name which God exalts, and which is "above every name" to us, if we have the mind of God. And the esteem in which we hold this name is a test by which we may try ourselves, and examine whether we are indeed His people. Once His name was a term of the deepest reproach, so that His disciples named it at the risk of martyrdom. Now, in this Christian land, that name is outwardly exalted by so many who have never exalted Him in their hearts, that there is great danger of self-deception, lest men should be found saying, "Lord, Lord, while they do not the things He commands. Oh, may we be found not only confessing Him with the mouth, but believing on Him with the heart unto righteousness! May the name which God hath highly exalted, the precious name of Jesus, be so written upon our inmost souls, that, through His grace *our* names may be written in His book of life. Let us walk worthy of Him in whose name we were baptized.

"To those who know the Lord I speak—

Is my Beloved near?

The Bridegroom of my soul I seek,

Oh, when will He appear?

"Though once a man of grief and shame,

Yet now He fills a throne,

And bears the greatest, sweetest name,

That earth or heaven has known."

April 23.

"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"
—1 Cor. iii. 3, 4.

"Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours."—1 Cor. iii. 21.

Let me watch over myself against the spirit for which the Corinthians were reprov'd—the spirit of *faction*, which is not less prevalent now than in the days of St. Paul. It is no light evil; it made the men of Corinth weak as babes, so that the apostle says he could not feed them with meat, for they were not able to bear it. By looking at the instruction he gave to the Ephesians, we may see what he meant by this, and how he refrained from feeding the "carnal" men of Corinth with the deep doctrinal food which he saw others fit to receive. They had not the meekness, the "laying aside of all malice," which are necessary to our receiving the Word of truth. Thus they lost much by their divisions. He meets the evil here by teaching them that men are but God's instruments, therefore "let no man glory in men;" the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; the teaching of His servants is of no avail, even from the mouth of an apostle, unless God give the increase. They were "*God's building*," "*God's husbandry*." And there is the highest comfort in this; for while we own the weakness of man, we are reminded of the strength of God. The work is His own; He will accomplish it, if we cast ourselves simply upon Him. The apostle tells his people, "*All are yours*." God's ministers, therefore, are yours! "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." Let us be thankful that there is among us now, as at Corinth, a variety of gifts, which God blesses to all varieties of minds. May we be careful lest we despise any of them, or fail to account of them "as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God!"

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April 24.

"Unto you therefore which believe He is precious."—1 Pet. ii. 7.

Here is a text by which men may try themselves, and ask, "Is Christ precious to me?" The question is not, Is religion precious? is salvation precious? is a holy life precious? "We may desire all these, and feel them to be precious, without looking up to Christ himself, and saying, "*He is precious*"—the living, personal, ever-present Saviour! How are we to gain clearer views of His preciousness? This is an important question for all: for I suppose no one will say that he knows enough of the value of Christ. "Unto you which *believe* He is precious." We must *believe* if we would love. A faithless heart cannot lay hold of the beauty of Christ—a careless, worldly heart passes by this great sight; it is too full of other guests to have room for Jesus. But where there is that faith which is the work of God's Spirit in the heart, there cannot but be a spirit of love to Him who is the object of such a faith. Without Him the sinner sees himself lost. In Him, and in His finished work, is the beginning and the ending of every good hope that can support him in this life by leading him to a better. Let us believe in Him *now*, and He will be precious; let us believe in Him *more and more*, and He will be *more* precious.

"Revive our drooping faith,
Our doubts and fears remove;
And kindle in our breasts the flame
Of never-dying love!"

April 25.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

—Ps. cxvi. 12.

This is that outpouring of the heart, under the sense of God's great mercy, which leads to new obedience. The man no longer seeks to render something that may win for him the favour of the Lord, as if any human effort could win pardon and salvation! But because God has first loved him, and has given him the unspeakable gift of His own dear Son, the heart is changed in its whole nature, and longs to become a living sacrifice of love to its God; the *power* of new life is given, with the faith of what Christ is to us; and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to renew, and raise, and sanctify the soul, so that it may be enabled to glorify God. We ought often to ask ourselves the question, "What shall I render, what *do* I render unto the Lord?" Are we rendering Him returns of ingratitude, of coldness and carelessness in His service? or are we rendering Him the service of willing hearts and devoted minds? Our best is all unworthy of His acceptance, and we can but ask Him for *more* benefits—more faith, more love, more grace, more zeal in His work. Then may we say, "Of Thine own have we rendered unto Thee!"

"Cleansed in Thine own all-purifying blood,

Forgive their evil and accept their good;

I cast them at Thy feet, my only plea

Is what it was—dependence upon Thee!"

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April 26.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." —Ps. xxvii. 13.

Many a Christian may use these words of David, and say, as he looks back on the rough places of his pilgrimage, "There, because of my sins, I had fainted; there again, through fears of the future, I had fainted; through bereavements, through afflictions, through spiritual darkness, through sore temptations, a hundred times I had fainted, unless I had believed! Not only I had fainted, I would even have *died* in the way, but for this belief that I would yet see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" *Faith cures fainting*; faith holds fast by the goodness of the Lord; none of our own sins or sorrows can touch *that*; and faith believes that it will be yet displayed, not in heaven only, but *now*, even here, "in the land of the living." Let me remember this when trouble comes, wave upon wave, so that it seems as if there was never more to be happiness in this world. Then is the time for faith to speak, and to tell of changeless love and boundless goodness, which, though hidden for a time, shall yet shine out from behind the clouds, and, even in the land of the living, shall be seen and enjoyed by the believing soul.

"Faint not, Christian, though the road
Leading to thy blest abode
Darksome be, and dangerous too,
Christ, thy Guide, shall bear thee through."

April 27.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."—Matt. vi. 34.

Our Lord repeatedly warns His followers against taking anxious thought for the morrow. He points to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, and draws from them the sweet lesson of simple trust which, alas! we are so slow to learn—"Take no thought for the morrow." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things;" therefore by anxious care we dishonour our Father, and doubt either His power or His willingness to provide for His children. Our Saviour's exhortations are necessary not for those only who gain their daily bread with difficulty, for the rich as well as the poor are far too prone to take anxious thought for the morrow, and heap to themselves cares of various kinds, which engross them to the exclusion of due care for their souls; and thus the thorns spring up and choke the seed of the Word in the field of their hearts. Lord, deliver us from those thorns! May we remember that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" and if inclined to fear that the evil will be *more* than sufficient, may we remember the other word of promise, "As thy day so shall thy strength be!" Alas! how many have lost the blessing of quiet peace all their lives, merely by *anticipating* evil! They have suffered not from what actually came, but from what they feared *might* one day come.

"Does each day upon its wing
Its allotted burden bring?
Load it not besides with sorrow
That belongeth to the morrow.
Strength is promised, strength is given,
Where the heart by God is riven;
But foredate the day of woe,
And alone thou bear'st the blow."

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April 28.

"He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man."—John ii. 24, 25.

And He knows *now* what is in man! Every thought, every motive, every passion, every feeling is known to Him; and yet He bears with us, listens to us, and answers our prayers! Nay, bestows ten thousand blessings we neither asked nor acknowledged. How marvellous is the long-suffering, how wonderful the patience and the forbearance of the Holy One! Conscience tells me that I have thought far too much of the human eyes that were upon me—far too little of the divine eye, the all-seeing eye of the holy God. It was the sin of the Pharisees that they did their good deeds *to be seen of men*. May the Lord deliver me from this spirit! There are many things to foster it in the present day, when there is much outward action and zealous effort in the cause of religion; for these may draw the soul away from that communion with God in secret in which its true life consists. Let me beware of distractions in that secret service of God which no eye sees but His own; and, remembering that He knows what is in man, let me seek to be without guile before Him. *"I know thy works."*