

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 1.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—John x. 11.

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."—1 Pet. ii. 25.

We are indeed weak and helpless, and prone to wander as sheep; unable to guide ourselves, unfit to defend ourselves, and even liable to become a prey to spoilers. But what a Shepherd is ours ! How wise, how careful, how strong to defend, how tender to support His poor, feeble flock! How well does He know His own sheep *by name*, and lead them out! How lovingly does He gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom! Oh, if we are of the happy number of those who can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," we may with confidence add, "I shall not want." We may be in sorrow on earth—we may have pain to suffer or trials to go through, but our Good Shepherd will not leave us in want of the far higher blessings which He alone can give; and it is often during those very times of sorrow and trial that He leads His sheep most to the still waters and the green pastures of spiritual consolation. And if He places them, in the wintry day, on the bare and exposed rock, it is only to save them from being smothered by the snow-drift in the sheltered hollow. The Good Shepherd has given the highest of all possible proofs of His love; and how can we distrust *His* guidance who "*giveth His life for the sheep?*"

"I love my Shepherd: He shall keep
My wand'ring soul among His sheep;
He feeds His flock, He calls their names,
And in His bosom bears the lambs."

April 2.

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."—1 Pet. i. 4.

"We do not think enough of heaven. If we have any good hope, through grace, of ever getting there, we *ought* to think much of it. The heir thinks of his inheritance, and prepares himself for it; and so ought we to think of and prepare ourselves for our inheritance. How fully does the description of it in the text meet, in a few words, the wants of our hearts! It is "*incorruptible*;" and we, in a world of death and corruption, long for something that will never know the decay from which our souls revolt. It is "*undefiled*;" and if we have anything of the Spirit's work of holiness dwelling in us, we long for an undefiled and pure and holy heaven, where no taint of sin can enter. It "fadeth not away," like every earthly thing to which we cling; it never can fade from us, nor we from it—never can lose its loveliness or brightness, like the joys of this world, which so soon pall upon us. It is "reserved in heaven" for us, beyond the reach of foes or risk of danger. It is all this and more, for it is the full possession of God himself as our portion for ever! O Lord, keep us by Thine own mighty power through faith unto salvation, till Thou bring us to Thyself *there!*

"Could we but stand where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Nor Jordan's stream nor death's cold flood
Should fright us from the shore."

April 3.

" Know ye that the Lord he is God."—Ps. c. 3.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."—Heb. x. 35.

There are times when no truth can give such support to the mind as this one first great truth of our holy faith, "The Lord he is God." "When some sudden stroke of affliction cuts into the heart like a sharp sword, and we cannot yet hear the voice of consolation for the bitterness of our anguish, the Lord speaks, and His voice to us comes with power that none may withstand, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God." We must be made to feel His glorious sovereignty; we must be taught that we are nothing except in Him— "The Lord he is God." Nature rebels at the lesson; but it is only when we have bowed and bent our spirits to receive it that we feel what comfort there is in this thought—comfort which flows like living streams from the flinty Rock, the great, strong, mighty Rock, which is, alas, to so many a Rock of offence! He is God; and the eternal sovereignty of our Father, unshaken by all that wicked men or devils can do, remains for ever the strength and glory of those who put their trust in Him. "*Be ye sure that the Lord he is God!*"

"Jehovah doth reign!
His people rejoice;
His hand can sustain
The flock of His choice.
"The heathen assemble,
The kingdoms are moved;
But why should they tremble,
Whom Jesus hath loved?"

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April 4.

"Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens ; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast."—Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6.

The Psalmist makes a sudden transition here, from the consideration of the wickedness of men to the glorious character and perfections of God. He had been stirred in heart by beholding "the transgression of the wicked;" his soul was grieved within him; and he found relief by turning to the thought of his God. If we remember that the words of David are often the words of David's Lord, how affecting is such a passage as this! It shews us the Holy One grieved (as we know He was in the days of His flesh) with the hardness of men's hearts, and turning from them to the Father, where all is glorious perfection, high as the heavens, reaching unto the clouds. And if this thought sustained our Lord, well may it sustain His servants when they share His grief at the sight of sin; for they know that, whatever evil there may be in this guilty earth, *there is* a mercy, and a faithfulness, and a righteousness above, under which the children of men may put their trust, and be "abundantly satisfied."

"Tell of His wondrous faithfulness,
And sound His praise abroad;
Sing the sweet promise of His grace,
And the performing God."

April 5.

"Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven,"—Matt. xvi. 16, 17. Compare with John i. 40, 41 — "Andrew Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, The Christ. And he brought him to Jesus."

By comparing these passages together we see what flesh and blood could do, and what it could not do, in bringing a man to Christ. His brother told Peter of the Messias, the Anointed, whom he had himself found, and he brought him to Jesus, that he might know and see this Saviour for himself. But he could do no more; he could not *make* him believe. A greater power was needed to reveal the Lord to Peter; and afterwards, at a later period, Jesus declares, that what flesh and blood could not do, His Father in heaven had done. Thus we may and ought to bring those who are dear to us to the Saviour; we may tell them the good tidings, and acknowledge our own belief in the Messias, the Christ, but it is the Father alone who can reveal the truth to the soul, and it is He whom we must ask to help us to do the thing which, without Him, we will not do, believing in His willingness to hear and answer sincere prayer.

"Jesus, mine Advocate above,
Let me not hear of Thee alone,
But make the wonders of Thy love
By sweet experience deeply known.
"On Thee my faith would fix her eye,
My lips would taste Thy heavenly grace;
Then should I raise Thine honour high,
And teach a thousand tongues Thy praise."

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April 6.

"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."—Isa. xliii. 25.

"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."
—1 Pet. ii. 24.

Let us look at that "*tree*"—at the cross of Christ, our tree of life—if we would see how it is that for His "own sake" He blotteth out the transgressions of His people. On that tree He himself "bare our sins," and God accepted the offering; and in this wonderful way, which angels desire to look into, God is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." These words of Isaiah in the ancient dispensation speak of a forgiveness only to be fully revealed in the coming of Christ; yet how strong and how clear is the promise ! It tells of a *blotting-out* of sin that is even more than forgiveness ; it speaks of one who knows all—even more than we in our most self-accusing moments know—yet one who "will not remember" our sins! And, to convince us, He has given not His word only, but the pledge of the cross of His own dear Son! Can we look at this greatest of all miracles—the miracle of Love hanging for our sakes upon the tree—and yet remain indifferent to the love of Jesus, regardless of the evil of sin?

"He died to bear the guilt of men,

That, sin might be forgiven;

He lives to bless them and defend,

And plead their cause in heaven."

April 7.

"They rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment."

—Luke xxiii. 56.

What a wonderful Sabbath-day was that! The world knew not how wonderful it was, and the men of the world, whether Jews or Romans, went on their ways as usual, regardless that all this day the Lord of life lay sleeping the sleep of death in Joseph's sepulchre ! It was a day full of mystery to angels in heaven. How strange it must have seemed to them, that they had not been summoned to come with all their bright legions to aid their Lord and Master before He was brought so low! Things like these "the angels desire to look into." To the spirits of darkness it must have seemed a day of triumph; yet the devil must have known that his time was short, and that his seeming victory was to *be* his great fall. To the infant Church gathered in the upper chamber this must have been a day of inexpressible desolation; but how often is the darkest hour the nearest to the dawn! They rested through that long, sad Sabbath, and *Jesus rested!* His bitter hour was past; pain and agony, and sorrow and sighing were over for Him now. The cup that His Father had given Him He had drunk to the dregs; and now He lay *low, low* in His humiliation *for us*, waiting His hour of exaltation —an exaltation which was also for us!

"For thee He died; for thee He lives again;

O'er thee He watches in His boundless reign."