

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 15.

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."—Luke xxiv. 36.

What a blessed salutation! Peace from Him who alone can give it. Peace purchased by Him with His own blood. Peace for time and for eternity. What a *depth* of peace lies in these words! He had won the victory; the agony, the bitter cross, the dark, cold grave were all behind Him now. He had risen and conquered, and the first pledge of His triumph bestowed on His Church lay in His first greeting, "Peace!" Yes, those whose sins are nailed to the cross, who have died with Him unto sin, *have peace*; a peace that the world knows not of, and can neither give nor take away. O Jesus, cause me to hear Thy peace-speaking voice! Suffer me not to disregard its gentle accents amidst the turmoil of this world's vanities. Enable me to meditate on *Thy* peace, and on all that Thou hast done to bestow it; and may my whole soul expand with love to Thee, who hast so loved our guilty world as to make thine own self an offering, that we might possess peace with God.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend,
Life and death and peace possessing,
From the sinner's dying Friend."

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April 16.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." —Luke xii. 35-37.

Love is the best watcher: love will keep the heart awake and the light burning for the Lord; but if we suffer the love of the world, and that spirit of indifference which so surely accompanies it, to take possession of us, there will be no watching, no *longing* for His appearing. When we think of all that our Lord has done for us, and of all the ties by which He has bound us to Himself, it seems strange that we should need such a warning as this: it seems as if it should be impossible for us to forget Him, and cease to watch for Him "more than they that watch for the morning." But, alas! our hearts are so prone to turn aside, that not only is the warning constantly needed, but it is also constantly disregarded, and we require to pray earnestly for a watchful and tender spirit, ready to take alarm at the least trace of coldness and carelessness. *He will come*, however long He may delay! *He will come suddenly*, however marked the signs of the times may be! Oh, that I may be found among those blessed ones whom, in that day, He shall find watching! I know that my spirit is willing, but let me never forget that my flesh is weak!

"Waiting for the Lord's returning,
Be it ours His word to keep;
Let our lamps be always burning,
Let us watch while others sleep.
We're no longer of the night;
We are children of the light."

April 17.

"And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts."—Mark iii. 5.

"And, looking up to heaven, He *sighed*."—Mark vii. 34.

"And He *sighed* deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" —Mark viii. 12.

How affecting are these glimpses of the feelings of the Holy Jesus in our unholy world! They reveal one of the deepest sorrows of the Man of Sorrows, the sorrow of beholding sin, of seeing his Father's name dishonoured among His *brethren* whom He loved. We can, in some sense, enter into this, by knowing how painful it is to a child of God to be cast among sinners, and these his own brothers and sisters in the flesh! But what are our feelings, poor sinners as we ourselves are, compared to those which affected the pure soul of Jesus! He could look into the hearts of those around Him, which we cannot do. And, oh, what revelations of sin must He have seen there! What unbelief among His own disciples! What godlessness among even the most seeming virtuous of the Pharisees by whom He was surrounded! I marvel at the patience of the Lord; at the long-suffering which endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself; and at the tender pity which healed all, even of that evil generation, who came to Him. What an example is here for us! O Lord, make me to learn *patience* from Thee, by learning Thy love!

"If He the scorn of wicked men
With patience did sustain,
Becomes it those for whom
He died to murmur and complain?"

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April 18.

"For the transgression of my people was He stricken."—Isa. liii. 8.

"Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."—John xix. 11.

It was not Pilate nor Herod, the Jews nor the Romans, that *caused* His cruel death,—“for the transgression of my people was He stricken;” centuries before had these words been uttered, which the fulness of time at last brought to pass. The Holy One who stood before that guilty, trembling, vacillating judge, knew that His hour was come, and met it in all its agonies, going like a lamb to the slaughter—going willingly, meekly, unresistingly, to be made a ransom for us. O Redeemer of the world, teach us aright to meditate on Thy wondrous work of redemption; teach us to follow Thee, in thought, to the garden, to the judgment-hall, and, lastly, to the bitter cross; trying to bring these dark hours before our minds, so that we may know something of the might of that love that bore Thee through them all. Then shall we see something of the exceeding evil of *sin*, when we consider it in the light of the sufferings it caused to Thee!

"All ye that pass by,

To Jesus draw nigh;

To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?

Your ransom and peace,

Your surety He is;

Come, see if there ever was sorrow like His!"

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April 19.

"They had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." —Matt. xvi. 5, 6.

"He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."—Luke xii. 1.

In the first of these verses two kinds of evil leaven are pointed out by the Lord as more dangerous than even that want of bread which the disciples, by their carelessness, were suffering from. They were told to *take heed* and *beware*, for there was danger, and to this danger professing disciples are perhaps more liable than others; for He said "*to His disciples first of all, Beware,*" &c.; and, lest they should be in any doubt as to His meaning, He tells them plainly that the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. It was the sin of the Pharisees that they affected an appearance of godliness without the reality; the Sadducees, on the other hand, were unbelievers,—and this, too, perhaps oftener in appearance than in reality, for an affectation of bold carelessness sometimes hides secret terrors. From both extremes His disciples were to flee. Some minds are prone to the Pharisee leaven, others to the Sadducee, and the same mind may be at different times tempted to both. A lively faith, working by love, will avoid both, for both are hateful to a God of *truth*; and let us seek to "purge out the old leaven" which lies by nature in every heart, and to substitute for it the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

"Let all thy actions be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noon-day clear,
For God's all-seeing eye surveys
Thy secret thoughts, thy words and ways."

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April 20.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."—John xi. 25.

When we see death around us and beside us, everywhere taking away those to whom we cling most fondly, and shaking every earthly prop from our grasp, how earnestly do we long for some sure standing-place beyond the reach of decay or the power of death. And this Jesus has given us; He has told us of a glorious resurrection, when all who believe shall live for ever in Him; and welcome, indeed, is this word of life in a dying world! Sin is the cause of death; sin is itself *death*; but in the new life with Christ Jesus, there will be no place found for either sin or death, for He has conquered "him that had the power of death, that is the devil." "What a light does His glorious gospel shed upon man's whole state and destiny! How does it raise the mourning spirit from the grave and the dust; and tell it the glad tidings of a blessed eternity obtained by Christ for His people; when not their ransomed souls alone, but their ransomed bodies, the whole man, shall live and praise Him, by the working of the same mighty power of God which raised Jesus Christ himself from the dead.

"As Jesus died and rose again

Victorious from the dead,

So His disciples rise and reign

"With their triumphant Head."

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April 21.

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."—Tit. iii. 8.

God calls us to the high honour of working for Him, or rather *with* Him, not that we can thereby obtain salvation, but that we may shew and enjoy our love to Him who has so loved us. He needs not our feeble services. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him?" (Job xxxv. 7.) And often, as if to teach us that

"God doth not need
Either man's work or His own gifts,"

we see some faithful labourer in His service suddenly taken away from us, lest we should lean too much upon man! He does not need us to help His cause, but all the more should we esteem it our highest honour that He condescends to employ *us* as His intelligent, sympathising instruments—He who might have sent whole armies of angels to do the work! Oh, may this thought arouse us to zeal in His holy and blessed service! May no day pass over our heads in which we are not careful to *maintain* some good work as He gives us grace and opportunity; and let us *pray for* opportunities! If sickness, weakness, or any other real hindrance prevents us from active work, let us engage the more earnestly in *praying* work, *silent* heart-work, patient, cheerful, *submissive* work; and if we cannot speak for God to others, we shall be not less useful nor honoured if we are found, in our retirement, all the more diligent in speaking *for them to God*. To accept of God's good will at all times, is at all times true work, though we can neither speak nor move a hand.