

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 8.

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre."—John xx. 1.

It was dark in the early dawn of that spring morning, and oh how dark in the stricken heart of Mary as she drew near to that sepulchre! Her sun had gone down there, as she thought, for ever; little did she know how gloriously He had already risen from the tomb. Let us go with her in spirit, and see the place where Jesus lay. The narrow bed, hallowed by Him, becomes no longer a terror to His people ; for His resurrection, which rolled the stone from the sepulchre, shall in due time open every sepulchre in this our world, so full of sepulchres, and they who are His own shall arise to meet Him in His glory above. Let us look at the place where Jesus lay, that we may there lay down our old natures and rise with Him in newness of life; in that sepulchre may we lay our vanity and pride, our earthly minds and our corrupt affections, our doubts and unbelieving fears, and may we, through His grace, arise filled with His Spirit! O Lord, grant us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that we may know "the power of His resurrection!"

"Break through my bonds, whate'er it cost,

What is not Thine within me slay,

Give me the lot I covet most,

To rise as Thou hast risen to-day.

I nought can do; a slave to death I pine,

Work Thou in me, O Power and life Divine!"

April 9.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."—Ps. xxxvii. 5.

"What a marvellous privilege is this, that we are permitted and commanded to bring our concerns before the Lord, however small they may be; and that in so doing we are encouraged to trust in Him, and expect that He will bring to pass the matter in which we are engaged. But perhaps our "way" may not be according to His plan and purpose for us. What then? It seems to me, that if we ask for *guidance* as well as *success*, we need not doubt that He will grant it, and I think that a Christian would shrink from asking the one without the other. When we "commit our way to the Lord," we ask Him to shew us what He would have us to do, we leave it to His wisdom to direct us; and having placed ourselves and our way in our Father's hand, it is sweet indeed to trust in Him, and feel sure that He will bring it to pass. We must first seek His guidance, and submit ourselves to it, and then we shall find peace in the exercise of faith in His promise. The Lord will shew us *His* way, and enable us cheerfully to adopt it as our own. We are not to look for signs and wonders, but we are to exercise in all humility the judgment He has given us, and we shall find our judgment strengthened and enlightened by having been brought to Him for direction.

"Lead, Saviour, lead, amid the circling gloom,
Lead Thou me on,
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Choose Thou my path,—I do not ask to see
The distant scene, one step enough for me!"

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April 10.

"When I awake, I am still with Thee."—Ps. cxxxix. 18.

How wonderful is the feeling of *His* presence, *His* nearness, who fills heaven and earth, and sustains the universe, and yet condescends to be *my God!* "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." When I awake in the stillness of the night, "I am still with Thee" and Thou art with me, O Thou watcher of Israel, who neither slumberest nor sleepest. Thus it is now, and thus will it be when awaking into eternity, after passing out of time. For neither *death* nor life can for a moment separate us from Him. Thus, too, will it be at the dawning of that solemn day of which every morning's awaking is a type. Little, indeed, can we know, or even conceive, of the great realities which will then be revealed. We know not what we shall be: nor how those bodies shall be raised incorruptible. We look through a glass darkly towards that great future, yet we may cling to this one thought, "When we awake, we shall still be *with Thee!*" With Jesus, who died for us; with Him who has loved us with an everlasting love, and saved us with His own blood; with our God, who has led us all through this great and terrible wilderness, and who will never leave nor forsake even the very least of His own redeemed children who put their trust in Him, but will be their portion now and for evermore. "When we awake, we shall be satisfied with Thy likeness."

"When I rise to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment-throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!"

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April 11.

"Remember me with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people; O visit me with Thy salvation."—Ps. cvi. 4.

Many pray this prayer with no clearer ideas of all that it implies than Balaam had when he cried, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," never meaning all the while to live the life of the righteous! Not such was the spirit of the Psalmist; and, oh, may I as fervently partake of the favour the Lord bears to His people as David here did! May I have faith to perceive the excellence of the portion of the righteous, though it may be one of suffering and trial, as far as this world is concerned. They are the children of a King, and He provides for them royally; but those who neither know their Father nor them, are ready to count them fools for Christ's sake. May I seek to share the children's bread, believing that no mere earthly portion can supply the wants of my soul, and that no favour of man is of such value as the favour of God! May I receive all the dealings and discipline of my heavenly Father as coming *from His hand* for my good; and, oh, may He so visit me with His salvation, that I may bring forth "*much fruit*" to His glory!

"Well may Thine own beloved, who see

In all their lot their Father's pleasure,

Bear loss of all they love, save Thee,

Their living, everlasting treasure!"

April 12.

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," —Ps. xlii. 2.

This is the cry of the *living* soul to a *living* God, from the midst of a dying and dead world. Sometimes we are peculiarly impressed with the sense of *vanity* in all around; with the feeling that there is nothing satisfying, nothing stable and enduring under the sun. But this is not of itself sufficient to make us long after-God; the poet truly says,

"'Tis, by comparison, an easy task

Earth to despise; but to converse with Heaven,

This is not easy!"

It is not simply "not easy," it is even impossible, unless we follow God, who draws our hearts upwards, and reveals Himself to us as the light and life and salvation of our souls. And this is the Psalmist's experience; he knows God, therefore he thirsts for God; he thirsts not after *religion* merely, nor the ordinances of religion; these can only lead to God, they cannot satisfy the soul's deep thirst as the "*living* God" alone can do. Let me cherish and strive to have *intense* desires after God, not content unless I have every day something of the Psalmist's feeling of *thirsting* for the living God. They who so thirst shall assuredly be filled!

"I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.
It was the sight of Thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."

April 13.

"But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."—Isa. xlix. 14.

"How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?"—Ps. xiii. 1.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"—Ps. lxxvii. 9.

The wail of Zion, the complaint of David, may still be often heard among the people of God. Among the *people of God*, I say; for it is not the *wicked* who cry in such tones of bitter anguish, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?" It is the child, not the stranger, who weeps when he cannot find his father, nor see his countenance of love. It is he who has known the goodness of the Lord that mourns the loss of His favour, as if the sun were quenched in the heavens. Deep and long afflictions may lead to this sad temptation, especially the affliction of bodily sufferings, for the body weighs down the mind in many a mysterious way; but whether produced by such means or not, the temptation is one of the sorest that can possibly beset the Christian, and calls for the tenderest sympathy and prayers of his happier brethren. One would think that the answer of the Lord to His afflicted Zion would be enough to silence for ever such a complaint, and to shew the mourner that he dishonours his God by even supposing that *He* can forget. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee!" Lord, keep me from either forgetting Thee, or ever thinking myself forgotten by Thee! The sun clearly shines, though *my* eyes, dimmed by tears, may discern but a luminous mist. But with "the Father of lights is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

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April 14.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."—Acts ix. 6.

If we are indeed sincere in asking this most important question, God will not leave us unanswered, though, perhaps, He may not at once reveal His will concerning us, but may give us, as a test of obedience, some duty to perform as simple as that which He gave first of all to the newly-awakened Saul of Tarsus—"Arise, and go into the city." How apt are we to think that we must do some great thing for Christ, while, perhaps, we are neglecting some very obvious though lowly duty which lies close to our feet. Again, how ready are we to look at our neighbours, and think what would be the right thing for *them* to do, instead of saying, "What wilt thou have *me* to do?" Truly, there would be fewer doubts about the way if there were more sincerity in asking and following it; and there would be fewer falls in the Christian's journey if he would be content to perform it step by step, the nearest duty first, and all for the Lord's sake, so as to make of each in its turn a practical answer to the question here asked.

"Oh, that I were an orange tree,

That busie plant!

Then should I ever laden be,

And never want

Some fruit for Him that dressed me!"