

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 15.

“Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.”—Ps. li. 4.

This is the thought that brings conviction of sin home to the heart. This is the arrow that is "sharp in the heart of the King's enemies," and in the heart of the King's subjects too when He sets their sin before them. Therefore, those who have lived the holiest lives have often had the deepest views of their sin, because they have looked into their own hearts, and seen there what God's eye has seen, *sin against Him!* And when His love has been revealed, nothing gives such pain as the thought, that "against *Thee,*" such a God as Thou art, I have sinned! It may be that the sin is grievous before men also, as was David's; but however painful the sense of humiliation before others may be, it is nothing to the sense of having so offended God, "*Thee only!*" Oh to have a conscience truly alive to heart sins, and truly humbled for those secret departures from God, which He only sees! But, Lord, grant me also a deep acquaintance with the fulness of forgiveness purchased by the blood of Christ, for nothing is so dreadful as the sight of sin without the sight of the Saviour!

My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While as a penitent I stand
And *there* confess my sin.
My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
While hanging on the accursed tree,
And trusts her guilt was there."

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May 16.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."—John xvii. 24.

This is the prayer of Jesus, and the will of Jesus concerning His own people; and every time that He takes away one of them from earth to heaven, we may see the fulfilment of this "I will." This is a thought that ought to be very soothing to us when one of His own beloved ones is thus taken from us; it is because Jesus would have them to be with Him, where He is, that He may shew them that which they have longed to behold—His glory—the surpassing glory which God, in His eternal love, has given to His well-beloved Son. How changed is the aspect of death, when we behold in it the hand of One who loves us beckoning us to come into His presence, and be with Him where He is! We know, indeed, little of the nature of the happiness prepared for God's children above, but we have here revealed the most important element in it—they are to be *with Him*, and no glory could satisfy them *without that*; therefore this point is always so distinctly set forth as being *the joy of heaven*—"so shall we ever be with the Lord,"—"we shall see Him as He is!"

"Here, in the body pent,
Absent from Thee I roam,
But nightly fix my moving tent
A day's march nearer home!"

May 17.

"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

It was in the act of *blessing* His infant Church that the Lord was taken up, and He has never ceased from that work. The hands He then lifted up to bless them, the *pierced* hands, have never ceased to pour down upon His Church every grace, and gift, and benefit that she has ever enjoyed. "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. "The gift of the Spirit, "the Comforter," the "promise of the Father," followed soon after His ascension—the first proof to the Church and to the world of the wonders that the risen Saviour was to accomplish. And of all the " multitude which no man can number," who in all countries and times since that day have been saved and sanctified, and brought to stand redeemed before the throne, there is not one who has not been saved by *Him*, and led *by Him*, and blessed with an everlasting blessing from those uplifted hands -Jew or Greek, bond or free, barbarian, Scythian, to Him alone do they ascribe their salvation; and mingling with those ancient names are those of the latest days, —modern Europeans, natives of India, Esquimaux, and Africans, and Americans, and New Zealanders,—all owe their *all* to that blessed Saviour, and cry, "There is none other name!"

"Nor death, nor life, nor earth, nor hell,
Nor time's destroying sway,
Can e'er efface us from His heart,
Or make His love decay.
Each future period that will bless
As it has bless'd the past;
He loved us from the first of time,
He loves us to the last."

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May 18.

"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."—Zech. xii. 10.

I have seen the mourning of a bereaved mother for her only son; oh, how deep, how intense, how bitter is such a grief! How it changes the whole world to the mourner, making her forget everything else in the one absorbing feeling of heart-anguish! And have I ever thus mourned for Him whom my sins have pierced? Have I *believed* and *comprehended* that for me He suffered such things? Have I ever so *looked* upon Him— so turned aside "to see this great sight," that my heart has been melted like the broken desolate heart of that poor mother? O Lord, grant me to know something of this mourning; it is better than all this vain world's rejoicing, for by Thy grace it will end in the only true rejoicing, when Thy Spirit, and the water, and the blood that flowed from that pierced side, "*agree in one.*"
" And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

"The Lord will happiness divine
On contrite hearts bestow:
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
A contrite heart or no?

* * * *

"Oh, make this heart rejoice or ache:
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break,
And heal it if it be."

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May 19.

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."—1 John ii. 17.

The first part of this verse may well stand as a true epitaph over many a grave of human greatness and glory—"The world passeth away;" and those who have made it their choice pass away with it down to the mighty ocean of eternity, whether they float as stately vessels, the "observed of all observers," or as humble, unnoticed little rafts! "The world passeth away, and the *lust* thereof,"—when in another world, will not men wonder why they loved this world so much? Will they not look with a very different eye on what once so deeply engrossed them? And can we say how soon it may be appointed for *our* eyes to look thus upon a world which shall have passed away from us, and upon an eternity which shall have dawned upon us? Life is passing quickly away, with all its concerns and cares; let me not, then, be either too much cast down or too much elated with that which is of so fleeting a nature— but may it be the one earnest desire and prayer of my heart to be found living to the glory of God while life is prolonged, that I may be among those who do the will of God and abide for ever!

"While our days on earth are lengthen'd,
May we give them, Lord, to Thee;
Cheer'd by hope, and daily strengthen'd,
May we run, nor wearied be; Till Thy glory,
Without clouds, in heaven we see!"

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May 20.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." —Eph. vi. 12.

"Your adversary the devil."—1 Pet. v. 8.

In these days of modern refinement, men are perhaps too ready to forget that *there is* such an adversary—*our* adversary—as strong and subtle as ever, and as full of enmity as ever against the seed of the woman; the serpent of Eden is *not* dead, though it is one of his wiles to make us think so, or at least to make us forget his awful existence! We find the writings of the apostles full of warnings against the devices of our malignant enemy; this was apostolic teaching on the subject, and in conformity with it we find the same warnings brought forward very prominently in the writings of our Reformers, Luther especially, whose belief was, in one instance, too strong for his bodily senses, so that he forgot that the adversary was not assailable by material weapons! "We wrestle not against flesh and blood;" and how much more awful is the conflict!—how much more formidable is an invisible than a visible foe,—formidable even from our disbelief of the danger, and forgetfulness of the need to watch! But "stronger is He that is with us than all they that can be against us;" and the Unseen Power that is ever ready to help is "more of might by far" than all the rulers of darkness that are against us. "From the crafts and assaults of the devil, good Lord, deliver us!"

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May 21.

"The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."—1 Pet. iv. 7.

If the end of all things was at hand in the apostle's days, surely it must be still more nearly at hand to us in these latter times. His exhortation, then, applies even more strongly to us, as he calls on us to "watch unto prayer." "Life is real, life is earnest," in the truest, deepest sense to one who believes that his Lord is at hand; he may not suffer himself to be engrossed with trifles; great thoughts have forced themselves on his mind; he hears the advancing footsteps of his Master; he feels that an attitude of watchfulness is the true state for him. Oh that the Lord by His Spirit would deeply impress our minds with the reality of those things! Oh that we could believe them as we ought! How closely would we then cleave to Him who alone can sustain us and enable us to walk through this life as those whose affections are set on things above! How sober-minded would we be, believing that the end is indeed at hand, when all earthly concerns shall pass away for ever!— how watchful unto prayer would we become, longing to hear Him say, "Blessed are those servants!"

"Come, Jesus! come! return again;
With brighter beam Thy servants bless,
Who long to feel Thy perfect reign,
And share Thy kingdom's happiness!"