

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 22.

"Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?"— John xvi. 31.

It is well for us to put this question often to our hearts; for there is an easy, assenting belief—passing current for true belief—which, in time of trial, is but a broken reed to trust to. Even the true believer sometimes needs to wake up the faith that is in him by this question, and to ask himself, "Why art thou so cast down with earthly troubles? 'Do ye *now* believe?' Do ye *now* feel that you have God for your Father? Have you *now* a sense of His presence and power? Pain oppresses and sorrow grieves you, but can you find no support in God? Have you a real faith, and can it do nothing more for you than this? Have you nothing better to sustain you than the men of the world have ?" It is related of a much-afflicted, aged Christian, that when the strokes of his heaviest misfortunes fell upon him, he found strength in repeating, from the depth of his heart, the words, "I believe in God the Father Almighty!" Words of solemn import, and strong reality! He thus took the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the wicked; and though we need not use the same words, as if there were any charm in them, we would do well to use the same weapon, and as our old divines would say—"Act faith in God."

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May 23.

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God." —Mark xi. 22.

The Lord here teaches His people the true secret of spiritual strength, that strength which removes mountains. How strong we might be if we had more faith! how steadily and joyfully would we run our Christian race! how calmly would we look on the storms which shake to its very centre the heart which has no such sustaining principle! Faith in God sees the hand of Omnipotence ruling all, and ruling for the good of His own people, and for the good of His own cause in their hearts, even when things seem most against them. Faith in God rests peacefully on that revelation of His glorious character given to us in His Son, relying with implicit trust upon His love as well as upon His power; and while others see nothing but darkness, faith beholds a light behind the clouds, by which she can read the promises of His Word, and note that they are all sealed by the greatest of all evidences, the blood shed upon Calvary.

"Teach me to live by faith,
Conform my will to Thine;
Let me victorious be in death,
And then in glory shine.

"If Thou these blessings give,
And wilt my Portion be,
Cheerful the world's poor toys I leave
To those who know not Thee."

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May 24.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father."—John xx. 17.

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side : and be not faithless, but believing."—John xx. 27.

How differently the Lord deals with these two disciples! Mary's faith did not require to be confirmed by an actual touch. She had said "Rabboni," and put her whole soul into the word. No shadow of doubt crossed her mind when she had once heard *that* voice say unto her, "Mary!" There was an instant rush of faith, and love, and gladness in her heart—He *was risen*. But she needed to be reminded that it was not now with Him as formerly, when she might draw near and minister to Him, and wash from His feet with her tears the dust of the wilderness, and wipe them with her hair, and anoint them with the costly ointment, and think it her greatest honour to be permitted to bestow on Him the most precious thing she possessed of worldly property. It was not so now. She might not *thus* minister to her Lord, but something she still might do—"Go to my brethren," tell them of their risen Saviour;—she who had first seen Him was first honoured to tell of Him. How different is Thomas's case, and how tenderly the Lord deals with him! Not a word of reproach, except the gentle admonition, "Be not faithless, but believing." And see how the Lord condescends to his weakness—he is invited to touch those blessed hands and that pierced side; and the faith that had been long of coming was a steadfast faith at last, for there was no trace of unbelief in Thomas's mind when he burst forth with his glad confession, "My Lord and my God ! "

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May 25.

"And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us." —Deut. i. 25.

Well may the believer say of the inheritance reserved for him, It is a good land, there is none like it, and better far than the grapes of Eshcol are its glorious fruits! We know that it is good, because it is God's gift—He will not give His children a stone for bread. We know that it is good, because of the price paid for it—not corruptible things, but the precious blood of Christ. And we know by His own sure word of promise—that it is good, and that Jesus has gone to prepare a place there for His own, among the many mansions of His Father's house above. These thoughts may well cheer the pilgrim's heart in his journey. It lies, indeed, full often through a wilderness, and there are enemies more formidable than the *Anakims* in the way, but 'stronger is He that is with us than all they that be against us.' Lord, when Thou hast finished all Thy plan and purpose with me here below, and prepared me—for that holy place by Thy good Spirit's working, oh, give me safe entrance into that land, that I may know by experience *how good it is!*

"Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy,
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy,
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair;
Sorrow and death may not enter there;
Time may not breathe on its changeless bloom.
For beyond the grave, and beyond the tomb,
It is there, it is there, my child!"

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May 26.

"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto-thee, and will look up."—Ps. v. 3.

Let me not forget the resolution of the Psalmist, nor fail to *look up* when I direct my prayers unto God in the morning. Let me *look up* to Him as my reconciled Father in Christ, more willing to give than I am to ask;. let me look up expecting to receive, waiting for His blessing. Let me look up to give thanks, for oh, how much have I to thank Him for! The morning hour seems especially to remind me of this, when I awake refreshed and strengthened, and remember that it is His hand that has preserved me, and His goodness that has restored me to new life and strength. Let me look up hopefully; hitherto He has helped me, He will not now forsake me; whatever may be the difficulties I anticipate this day, I have His promise, "As thy day thy strength shall be." Let me look up, and drink in the blessing of heaven, sweeter than the fragrance of morning. There are times to look down, and times to look within—times to look back on the past, and times to look forward to the future; the morning hour, when I direct my prayer to God, is the time to *look up*.

"Teach me Thy love to know;
That this light which now I see
May both the work and workman show;
Then by a sunbeam I will climb to Thee!"

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May 27.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."
—Phil. iv. 5.

Moderation does not mean apathy or indifference, either real or affected; I think we may find the explanation of the moderation here spoken of, in the last part of the verse; for if we remember that the "Lord is at hand" there will be a true "moderation" in our feelings about earthly things, which may be "known unto all men," if they wish to know the reason of it. The expression may refer to the nearness of our Lord's coming, but I believe that it *also* may mean that even now He is at hand, His presence is with us, His eye is upon us, —"there standeth One among you whom ye know not." This thought should moderate the ardour of our pursuit of earthly objects, but how should it stimulate us to press on after the attainment of spiritual blessings! Lord, grant us such a sense of Thy presence and glory, that this world may never have power to engross our minds; so shall our moderation proceed from a right source—be known of all men—and be known to arise from faith in Thee!

"I ask Thee for Thy daily grace,
To none who ask denied,
And a mind to blend with outward life,
While keeping by Thy side.
Content to fill a little space,
So thou art glorified."

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May 28.

"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John xiv. 26.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise;"— the disciples proved this when the day of Pentecost was fully come, and the great presence of the promised Comforter revealed Himself with a sound, as of a rushing mighty wind, and with the sight of cloven tongues of fire sitting upon each of those highly-favoured heads! He is not now thus seen nor heard in the power of His wondrous gifts,—but the *graces* of the Holy Spirit are continually present with the Church of Christ; and the Lord, who at first sent Him, is still saying to each of us, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Why do we not *receive* more? it is because we do not *ask* more, and because we do not *ask in faith!* "Lord, increase our faith," and increase in us a spirit of grace and supplication; we need the *Comforter*, we need the *Teacher* as much as ever Thy first followers did. O God, make clean our hearts within us, and "take not thy Holy Spirit from us!"

"Come as the Dove, and spread Thy wings,
The wings of peaceful love;
And let the Church on earth become
Blest as the Church above! "