

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.

October 22.

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." --Isaiah liv. 10.

We look upon the mountains and the "everlasting hills" as the most steadfast and unchanging of all the works of God below; yet even for them there shall come a day of dissolution, wherein "the elements shall melt with fervent heat." How precious then is the promise that assures us of a love divine that no change can affect; how comforting is the thought of a "covenant of peace," that shall stand unshaken amidst the wreck of worlds! These are the words of the Lord himself. He stoops to the weakness of His church, and tells her of the unchangeable strength of his covenant in words that thrill the heart. It is not for anything in themselves that God has made this covenant so strong with His people; it is because he looks upon them as in *Christ*; they are accepted in the Beloved, out of the free love of God the Father; and if they enjoy the rich blessings of His eternal covenant, it is not for their own sakes, but because the Lord, for Christ's sake, hath mercy on them. Let the thought of Thy loving kindness and Thine everlasting covenant, O Lord, be present to my mind whenever I look upon Thy glorious works in the "ancient mountains" and the "lasting hills."

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October 23.

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

-- Isaiah xi. 9.

This is no mere dream; it is a real prophecy of a real state of things yet to be revealed, whether we behold it or not. How difficult it is for our earthly natures to conceive the idea of a world of perfect holiness! If we do not love and long after holiness *here*, the thought of such a *hereafter* can give us no feelings but those of dislike and dread. I would pray, "O God, make me see the *beauty* of Thy holy mountain! It is high, I cannot attain unto it!" I would look on the holiness of Jesus to learn what holiness is; for none but he ever displayed perfect purity on earth; and it is said of those who shall dwell with Him in that world of glory, that they shall be *like Him*, for they shall see Him as He is. "They shall not hurt nor destroy," -- ah, how unlike this world, so full of wars, and fightings, and tumults! "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord," our own state of imperfect knowledge and still more imperfect practice. Be it mine to look forward and long for that blessed time, for the *hope* of holiness is a *means* of holiness: "every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure."

"To an inheritance divine,
He taught our hearts to rise;
'Tis uncorrupted, undefiled,
Unfading in the skies."

October 24.

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."
--Gen. xii. 1.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." -- Heb. xi. 8.

"They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. -- Gal. ii. 7.

Think of our father Abraham in his grand simplicity of faith! Picture him to the mind, wandering away with his whole family and long train of flocks and herds -- the richest of all the men in his land -- over the great wide plains of the East, which remain the same to this day; leaving his country, his kindred, his father's house, not to seek for himself fairer pastures or a fixed abode, but in simple obedience to the voice that called him, "he went out, not knowing whither he went." Well does he deserve the title of the Father of the Faithful! Think, too, how different was the food which sustained his spiritual life from ours; he had no church, no sacraments, no Bible, no long line of witnesses to the truth to encourage him in the records of the past, no living saints (or very few and far between) with whom to hold sweet counsel; his life of faith was *all* faith, strong, simple, and *alone with God*, hearing His voice as He revealed Himself by the name of God Almighty, and ever believing and obeying, so that "he was called the Friend of God." Let us look at him and learn what faith is; "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

October 25.

"Without me ye can do nothing." -- John xv. 5.

Do we really believe those words of Jesus? Do we act as if we believed them? His own apostles believed them, "*His name*, through faith in His name," was the secret by which they worked wonders, and we never read that it failed them. Jesus is the same now as then, and His people are the same now as then; they are as weak as ever, and He is as strong and as willing to be their strength if they but knew and believed this, and were willing to "abide in Him." The man of the world does many things in his own strength, but the man of God can do nothing for God of himself; he is weak at the beginning of his Christian course, and weak all the way through, *if left alone*; but he need never be weak with such a Saviour to go to, such promises to plead, such a prayer-hearing God to supply all his wants. Let us bind this word of warning to our hearts, to make us continually sensible of our own weakness, and if, according to His own word, we abide in Him, and He in us, we shall through His grace be enabled to say with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

"Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone,
And ev'n an angel would be weak
Who trusted in his own."

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October 26.

"When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory."
-- Ps. cii. 16.

The servants of God are often cast down in looking at the condition of the Church, the true Zion. They see iniquity abound, and the love of many wax cold; the kingdom of God does not seem to advance as they would have it do, and adversaries, both from within and without, hinder its progress; they see glorious things spoken of the city of God in holy prophecy, but still the fulfilment lingers; "Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation!" When such thoughts oppress our hearts, as they *must* sometimes do the hearts of all who long for the advancement of God's kingdom upon earth, let us think of the sure promise, and remember that it is the *Lord's own work* to build up Zion. We sigh for more efficient ministers, more zealous and more numerous missionaries: well, but it is *the Lord* who shall build up Zion, and He will do it in His own good time and in His own way; and when He does the work "He shall appear in His glory," and we shall know that He has done all things well. Zion's prosperity is not dearer to us than it is to Zion's Lord; and the day will come, which it should cheer our hearts to think of, when He will "present to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish."

"What though the gates of hell withstood,
Yet must this building rise;

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'Tis thine own work, Almighty God,
And wondrous in our eyes."

October 27.

"The glorious majesty of His kingdom." -- Ps. cxiv. 12.

Let me raise my thoughts from the earth and meditate on this great subject. Let me think of the King and His kingdom! How wonderful He is in His majesty, how infinite and unsearchable in His wisdom, how marvelous in His condescension that he permits even such as me to approach His mercy-seat and to call Him, Abba, Father. If my eye could pierce the veil of blue firmament that hides from from this world the glories of His heavenly temple, I would see such a light as "no man can approach unto," such a vision of splendour as made Isaiah cry, "Woe is me for I am undone!" It is in mercy and pity for our weakness that *this* "glorious majesty of His kingdom" is concealed from us; but let us not forget its *existence*, nor cease to remember, when we draw near to our God, that He sits upon a throne before which the seraphim cover their faces with their wings. He has shown us in another way the glorious majesty of His kingdom. He has translated *us* into it; He has brought into it those who were rebels against His government, making them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. He has given life to the dead, pardon to the guilty, holiness to the unholy, salvation to the lost. "Now to *the King* eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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October 28.

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. -- 1 Cor. ix. 24.

The Christian life is compared to a race, but, oh, how indolent are too many of the runners! How languid are their efforts compared with the intense energy of many who are striving for the veriest trifles! Do we not see every nerve strained, every thought bent on winning the prize in the literal race? while in the race for riches, and the pursuit of fame, fashion or ambition, the competitors risk life itself to gain their end, putting to shame the feeble efforts of many who seek to obtain not a corruptible but an incorruptible crown. May I be roused to energy by the sight of these runners in the race of life, and learn something of what the apostle meant when he said, "So run that ye may obtain." May I run *in the right* path; many fall into fatal error here. May I run with a right spirit, and above all, may I run "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith."

"Oh, help each other, hasten on,
Behold, the goal is nigh at hand;
The battle-field will soon be won,
Your King shall soon before you stand;
To calmest rest he leads you now,
And sets His crown upon your brow-- Press on!"