

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 1.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."—1 John iii. 1.

The sons of God! Can this indeed be true? Can sinners, rebels, indeed acquire a title to such a name as this? The more we think *what God is*, and what *we are*, the more wonderful does this seem; wonderful, but not for a moment to be doubted, since *God hath said it*. Well might the apostle, who knew love best, say, "Behold what manner of love!" If such, then, is the name, what ought to be the character of the believer? How holy, how humble, how heavenly-minded ought he to be? How raised above the entanglements of earthly vanities! How separate from a world lying in wickedness ! And how ought he to *rejoice!* Let the world call him what it will, and scorn him as it will, his is a title and an inheritance, compared to which that of the world's proudest throne is but vanity; he may be despised among men, but he is of those whom the Father hath called the sons of *God!*

"Behold the amazing gift of love,
The Father hath bestow'd
On us, the sinful sons of men,
To call us sons of God!"

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May 2.

"My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." —Sol. Song ii. 10-13.

There are winters and springs in the Church, as well as in nature, and not only in the Church as a whole, but in each individual heart; and it may be that our own hearts are cold, and dead, and hard at the very time when all creation is warmed with the breath of spring, and everything around is bursting into life and beauty. Let us listen to the voice of Jesus, if we would have our souls revived. Let us open our hearts to the influences of the Sun of righteousness; He alone can inspire new life into them. Then shall we be warmed into love, and melted into penitence; tears, fruitful as spring showers, shall flow when we think of our past indifference, and even more lovely than the sweet spring of nature will be the spring of life and grace in the renewed heart.

"Speak, and by Thy gracious voice,
Make my drooping soul rejoice.
O beloved Saviour, haste,
Tell me all the storms are past;
On Thy garden deign to smile,
Raise the plants, enrich the soil;
Soon Thy presence will restore
Life to what seem'd dead before."

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May 3.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."—John xv. 7.

The question is often raised how far we are to understand literally this promise of receiving whatever we ask. Perhaps it may be best answered by considering it in connexion with the first part of the text. If we abide in Christ, and have His words abiding in us, we need not fear to take the full benefit of His promise, for then we shall ask only what is in accordance with His will, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "Whatsoever ye ask *in my name*." (John xv. 18 ; xvi. 23.) This abiding in Christ would put a stop to our asking for vain things, or things inconsistent with His mind and will, and would give full confidence in asking for the real blessings. Alas! why do we so little plead the promise and ask, *believing* that we *shall receive* ? It is because of this unbelief that our prayers meet with little returns compared with what such a promise as this would lead us to expect. The spirit of belief and the spirit of prayer must come from God; for this let us ask, and take this word of our Lord's as our sure warrant, seeking to abide in Him, for through Him only can we find acceptance.

"O Thou, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod,
Lord, teach us how to pray!"

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May 4.

"O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches ; so is this great sea."—Ps. civ. 24.

How wonderful is the variety in the works of God! They are indeed *manifold*, and each is in its own way framed in perfect wisdom, as even an unscientific eye may perceive. And as I value a picture or piece of work because it was done by some dear friend, whose mind designed, and whose fingers executed it, so may I look upon a flower, or a shell, or any of God's fair works, and say, I love it for my Father's sake, "my Father made them all!" Infinitely great as He is, these things were not beneath His notice, and they tell me that *neither am I*. Stars above, and flowers beneath, were designed and fashioned by Him, but far more dear to His eye must be the human souls He has created. It is because He is so great that nothing is too small for His care; and therefore it is, that when He would reprove the faithlessness of His people, He says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord?"

"Thus wisdom's words discover
Thy glory and Thy grace,
Thou everlasting lover
Of our unworthy race.
Thy gracious eye survey'd us
E'er stars were seen above;
In wisdom Thou hast made us,
And died for us in love!"

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May 5.

"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."—Luke xviii. 16.

How many a believing mother, how many a believing little child, has blessed the Lord for those precious words! They are the parent's warrant in teaching, and training, and praying with and for the child. But for these words we might be tempted to agree with the disciples who rebuked those that brought the little children to Jesus; for unbelief and pride of intellect are apt still to say, "What can a child understand of heavenly things? how can a child know God?" But Christ's own teaching shews us the very contrary; instead of forbidding the child to come, He warns us all, that unless we come *as* little children, we cannot see the kingdom of heaven. The faith of a child must be the pattern for us, for faith is *of the heart*, and not of the intellect only. He invites the little ones to come to Him with their childlike thoughts, and their lisping words ; and, perhaps, it is to teach us in our pride that our understanding of heavenly things is, after all, not much liker the great realities than the conceptions of children are! Let us bless the Lord for the revelation of Jesus contained in those gracious words; they have won the heart of many a dear infant to the love of the Saviour, and many redeemed babes will praise Him throughout eternity for His call of love to the little children.

"Permit them to approach,' He cries,

Nor scorns their humble name:

For 'twas to bless such souls as these

The Lord of angels came."

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May 6.

"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."—John xvi. 13.

A most precious promise to those who seek truth, but to those only who seek it through the right guidance. Men vainly think that *earnestness* and *diligence* in the search are enough to make them find the truth, but the promise is not given to any such seeking—we must ask the Holy Spirit himself to be our guide, if we would attain the knowledge of that which He alone can reveal. Let me, then, lay fast hold of this promise, believing that the Spirit of Truth is indeed willing to guide me. Let me never open the Book of Truth without asking His guidance, and believing with peaceful confidence that He grants it. Let me beware of trusting either to my own *unassisted* reason or the reason of other men; why should I seek the light of candles when I may walk in sunshine ? The Holy Spirit of God is really present with His people, and never will fail to fulfil this promise to those who truly ask His teaching through Jesus Christ.

"Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Let Thy bright beams arise,

Dispel the sorrow from our minds,

The darkness from our eyes."

May 7.

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."—Colossians iii. 15.

This is a positive command of God to us, as much as any other in Scripture; how important, then, to cherish in our hearts this holy peace of God, and to seek that it may not only *visit* but *rule* within us. We are to let the peace of God enter, He is willing that we should possess it; but our own passions and follies and sinful anxieties shut it out from our hearts, as persons with weak eyes shut out the sunbeams from their room, and thus we often sit in the dark when we might have the sweet sunshine of God's peace resting upon us. Note the connexion between the enjoyment of peace and the exercise of thankfulness—"let the peace of God rule, and be ye thankful;" as also in Philippians iv. 6 and 7— "in everything, by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving* . . . and the *peace of God*, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." There is no better way to bring back disturbed peace than to lift up the heart and *give thanks* ; then we recall His mercies, His love, His long-suffering, and almost before we are aware the cloud has disappeared, or rather we have soared above it, and we feel again what a Saviour Jesus is!

"Yet even the greatest griefs
May be reliefs,
Could we but take them right, and in their ways.
Happy is he whose heart
Hath found the art
To turn his double pains to double praise."