

4th June 2022

Now!

“Never fail daily to do that good thing which lies next to your hand.”

George MacDonald, as quoted in *The Way to Win*, by John Thomas Dale

I've sometimes used quotes from the eighteenth-century Scottish poet, George MacDonald, for my daily thought. MacDonald was an author, poet and Christian minister, and is considered by many to be the forerunner of what we might now call “fantasy literature”. A mentor to fellow writer Lewis Carol, he's been cited as a major influence by W H Auden, J M Barrie, Mark Twain and many others. C S Lewis wrote that he regarded MacDonald as his “master”, and G K Chesterton cited MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* as a book that had “made a difference to my whole existence.

All of this might give the impression that this minister of a bygone age lived exclusively in a land of fantasy and fairy tales, make-believe and mystery. But throughout his life he remained anchored in reality, rooted in Scripture, and offered several theological reflections designed to be guides to Christians in their daily living. The quotation with which I've begun today is one such reflection and deserves to be quoted in full.

You are tender-hearted, and you want to be true, and are trying to be; learn these two things: Never be discouraged because good things get on so slowly here; and never fail daily to do that good which lies next to your hand. Do not be in a hurry, but be diligent ... Trust to God to weave your little thread into the great web, though the pattern shows it not yet. When God's people are able and willing thus to labour and wait, remember that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; the grand harvest of the ages shall come to its reaping, and the day shall broaden itself to a thousand years, and the thousand years shall show themselves as a perfect and finished day.

This is no fantasy world! This is guidance for everyday living – for us all.

Don't be discouraged when good things are slow to bear fruit. Keep at it! Never fail to do good, now, here, when it matters. Be diligent. Offer yourself to what lies close at hand. Give your time and love to that. Don't worry about getting it all right all of the time. The harvest will be in God's hands, and His time may not be yours. “Trust to God” and you'll not go far wrong. Fantasy? Not at all! For that's surely a reality worth considering, for all of us, in the here and now of our living.

A prayer for today

Now! What Good can I do that's real and helpful – now!

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