

Light for Those Who Sit in Darkness

A Sermon

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“The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephtholim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up,”—[Matthew 4:15-16](#).

FULL OF LOVE to the place where he had been brought up, our Lord had gone to Nazareth, and in the Synagogue he had preached the gladdest tidings; but, alas, the greatest of prophets and the Lord of prophets, received no honor in his own country. “He came unto his own and his own received him not.” Expelled the city by violence, the patient one turned his footsteps another way, yet, even when justly angry, love guided his footsteps. He must go for the Nazarenes had proved themselves unworthy, but whither shall he go? He will go to the outcasts, to that part of his country which was most neglected, to that region where the population was mixed and degenerate so as to be called, not Galilee of the Jews, but Galilee of the Gentiles, where from distance from Jerusalem little was known of the worship of the temple, where error was rampant, where men's minds were enveloped in darkness, and their hearts in the gloom of deathshade. The loss of Nazareth shall be the gain of Galilee. Even his judgment upon a place is overruled in mercy, and even thus to day there are some in this house who have often had Jesus preached to them from their very childhood, but until this hour they have refused obedience to the gospel's command. What if he should now turn away from them; I pray he may not have done so already. Yet, in turning away from them, he will deal with others in mercy. As the casting away of the Jews was the salvation of the Gentiles, so the leaving of these privileged ones shall open a door of mercy and hope to those who have not enjoyed the privilege aforesaid. To you who are not familiar with the gospel sound, to you who count yourselves more unworthy than the rest of mankind, to you desponding and despairing ones who write bitter things against yourselves, to you is the gospel sent. As aforesaid, the Lord preached to Zabulon and Nephtholim, and the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, even so is he this day proclaimed among you.

From the text it appears that *some are in greater darkness than others*; and that, secondly, *for such there is a hope of light*; but that, thirdly, *the light which will come to them lies all in Christ*; and, fourthly (joyful news!) *that light is already sprung up all around them*: they have but to open their eyes to delight in it.

I. SOME SOULS ARE IN GREATER DARKNESS THAN OTHERS. It appears from the text that it was so in Christ's days, and certainly it is so now. Divine sovereignty runs

through all God's dealings. He does not even distribute the privilege of hearing the gospel to all alike, for some lands are as yet untrodden by the missionary's foot, while here at the corner of all our streets the gospel is preached to us. Some, from the very circumstances of their birth and parentage, have never attended the worship of God, while others, even before they had the discretion to choose, were carried in their parents' arms to the place where prayer is wont to be made. God distributeth his grace and privileges even as he wills.

In the text, those persons who were more deplorably circumstanced than others are described first as being *in darkness*—"The people that sat in darkness;" by which is meant, first, *ignorance*. The Galileans were notoriously ignorant: few teachers of the law had been among them; they did not know even the letter of the law. So are there many, to whom the gospel, even in the theory of it, is a thing scarcely known. They may have gone to places of worship in this country from their youth up, and have never heard the gospel, for the gospel is a rare thing in some synagogues; you shall hear philosophy, you shall hear ceremonialism and sacramentarianism cried up, but the blessed truth, "Believe, and live," is kept in the background, so that men may come to full age, ay, and even to old age, in Christian England, and yet the plan of salvation by the righteousness of Jesus Christ may be an unknown thing to them. They sit in the darkness of ignorance.

The consequence is, that another darkness follows, the darkness of *error*. Men who know not the truth, since they must have some faith, seek out many inventions; for, if they are not taught of God, they soon become taught of Satan, and apt scholars are they in his school. Galilee was noted for the heresies which abounded there. But what a mercy it is that God can save heretics. Those who have received false doctrine, and added darkness to darkness in so doing, can yet be brought into the glorious light of truth. Though they may have denied the Deity of Christ, though they may have doubted the inspiration of Scripture, though they may have fallen into many traps and pitfalls of false doctrine, yet the Divine Shepherd, when he seeks his lost sheep, can find them out and bring them home again.

In consequence of being in the darkness of ignorance and error, these people were wrapt in the gloom of *discomfort and sorrow*. Darkness is an expressive type of sorrow. The mind that knows not God, knows not the heart's best rest. There is no solace for our griefs like the gospel of Jesus Christ, and those who are ignorant of it are tossed about upon a stormy sea, without an anchorage. Glory be to God; when sorrow has brought on a midnight, grace can transform it into noon.

This darkness of sorrow was no doubt attended with much *fear*. We love not darkness because we cannot see what is before us, and therefore we are alarmed by imaginary dangers; and, in the same way, those who are ignorant of the light of Christ will frequently be the victims of superstitious dread; ay, and true and well founded fears will arise too, for they will dread death, and the bar of God, and the sentence of justice. Believe me, there is no darkness so black as the horror which surrounds many an awakened conscience when it

sees its ruin, but cannot find a Savior; feels its sin, and cannot see the way by which it may be expiated.

Here, then, we have considered one part of this sad condition; perhaps it describes some of you.

It is said next that they “*sat* in darkness.” Matthew did not quote from Isaiah correctly; I think he purposely alters it. Isaiah speaks, in his ninth chapter, of a people that “*walked* in darkness;” but here the evangelist speaks of a people who “*sat* in darkness.” That is a state of less hopefulness. The man who walks is active, he has some energy left, and may reach a brighter spot; but a man sitting down is inactive, and will probably abide where he is. “The people that sat in darkness”—as if they had been there a long while, and would be there longer yet. They sat as though they had been turned to stone. They “sat in darkness,” probably through despair; they had, after a fashion, striven for the light, but had not found it, and so they gave up all hope. Their disappointed hearts told them that they might as well spare those fruitless efforts, and therefore down they sat with the stolidity of hopelessness. Why should they make any more exertion? If God would not hear their prayers, why should they pray any longer? Being ignorant of his abounding grace, and of the way of salvation by his Son, they considered themselves as consigned to perdition. They “sat in darkness.” Perhaps they sat there so long that they reached a state of insensibility and indifference, and this is a horrible condition of heart; but, alas! a very common one. They said, “What matters it, since there is no hope for us? Let it be as fate appoints, we will sit still, we will neither cry nor pray.” How many have I met with who are not only thus in darkness, but are half-content to dare the terrible future, and sullenly to wait till the storm-cloud of wrath shall burst over them. It is a most sad and wretched condition, but what a blessing it is that this day we have a gospel to preach to such.

Our description is not complete, for the text goes on to speak of them as sitting “*in the region of death*,” that is to say, these people lived in a territory that appeared to be ruled by death, and to be death’s haunt and natural abode. Many at this time, and in this City, are truly living in the domain of spiritual death. All around them is death. If they have stepped into this house this morning, their position is an exception to their general one. They will go home to a Sabbath-breaking household; they hear habitually oaths, profane language, and lascivious songs; and thus they breathe the reek of the charnel-house. If they have a good thought, it is ridiculed by those about them. They dwell as among the tombs, with men whose mouths are open sepulchres, pouring forth all manner of offensiveness. How sad a condition! It seems to such poor souls, perhaps, being now a little awakened, that everything about them is prophetic of death. They are afraid to take a step lest the earth should open a door to the bottomless pit. I remember well, when I was under conviction, how all the world seemed in league against me, the beasts of the field and the stones thereof. I wondered then the heavens could refrain from falling upon me, or the earth from opening

her mouth to swallow me up. I was under sentence of divine wrath, and felt as if I were in a condemned cell, and all creation were but the walls of my dungeon. "They sat in the region of death."

But it is added that they sat "*in the shadow of death*;" that is, under its cold, poisonous, depressing shade; as though grim death stood over them in all they did, and his shadow kept from them the light of heaven. They are sitting there this morning: they are saying to themselves, "Preach, sir, as you may, you will never comfort me: you may tell me of love and mercy, but I shall never be cheered thereby: I am chilled through my very marrow, as though the frost of death had smitten me: I am unable now to hope, or even to pray, even my desires are all but dead. Like a frozen corpse is my soul."

And it is implied, too, that to such death itself is very near, for those who are in the shadow of a thing are near to the thing itself; and the sinner, bewildered and amazed at the guilt of his sin, is only sure of one thing, and that is, that he is in immediate danger of being cast into hell. I have known some afraid to shut their eyes at night, lest they should open them in torments; others have been afraid to go to their beds, lest their couch should become their coffin; they have not known what to do, by reason of depression of spirit. Job's language has been theirs, "My soul is weary of my life." It is clear to me that the description of the text very accurately pictures many of the sons of men. I pray God that none of you poor darkened souls may be so foolish as to try to exclude yourself from it, though such is the perversity of despondency that I greatly fear you may do so. However small we make the meshes of the gospel net, there are certain little fish that will find a way of escaping from its blessed toils, though we try to meet the character, we miss it through the singular dexterity of despair. The fact is that when a man is sin-sick, his soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and unless the beloved physician shall interpose, he will die of famine with the bread of life spread out before him. Dear friends, may the Lord visit you with his saving health, and give to the saddest of you joy and peace in believing.

II. Having given the description of those in the darkness, let us now pass on to the second point. FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN A WORSE CONDITION THAN OTHERS THERE IS HOPE AND LIGHT.

To the benighted land of Zabulon and Naphtali the gospel came, and evermore to souls enwrapped in gloom the gospel has come as a cheering and guiding light; and there are good reasons why it should be so. For, first, among such people the gospel has reaped very rich fruit. Among barbarous nations Christ has won great trophies. The poor Karens are wonders of grace, the cannibals of the South Sea Islands are miracles of mercy, and among the once enslaved Ethiopians there are warm and loving hearts which rejoice in Jesus' name. In this city, I will venture to say, that no churches reflect more honor upon the Master's name than those which have been gathered from among the destitute districts. What wonders God has done by that blessed church in Golden Lane, under our dear brother Orsman? What con-

versions have taken place in connection with the mission churches of St. Giles' and White-chapel? churches made of the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low. God is glorified when the thief and the harlot are washed and cleansed and made obedient to the law of Christ. When those who are healed stand at the pastor's side, even ribald tongues are silent, or are made to exclaim, "What hath God wrought?" The same is true of persons mentally depressed, who are despairing of themselves; many such have been converted. Some of us were brought very low before we found the Savior; lower we could not well have been: we were emptied like a dish that a man wipes and turns upside down; we had not even a drop of hope left in us; but we rejoice in Christ to-day, and we say to despairing souls, we are personal witnesses that Christ has saved such as you are, he has in our case caused light to shine on those who sat in darkness, and out of death's cold shade into life's full light he has brought us as prisoners of hope; and, therefore, he can do the same with you. Be of good courage, there is hope for you.

It is a further consolation to sad hearts, that many promises are made to such characters, even to those who are most dark. How precious is that word, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is not that made for you, ye burdened and laboring sinners? What say you to that gracious word—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them?" Is there no light in that word of love—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon?" Is there no music in this passage—"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea?" I recollect when my soul was stayed for weeks on that one short word, "Whosoever *calleth* upon the Lord, shall be saved." I knew I did call on his name, and therefore I hoped to see his salvation. Many have laid hold and rested themselves on this faithful saying, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." He will receive any "him" or "her" in all the world that comes, be he or she ever so defiled. That also is a rich word, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." What a word was that of our Master when he commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem. They were to commence their labors amongst his murderers, amongst hypocritical Pharisees and proud Herodians; they were to begin where the devil reigned most supreme, and to present Christ to the worst sinners first. See you, then, that great sinners, so far from being excluded, are just those to whom the good news is to be first published. Be of good comfort, then, ye that sit in darkness: there are special promises for you.

Moreover, remember, that the conversion of the more deplorably dark and despairing brings the highest degree of glory to God. When his glory passes by great sin, then it is mercy indeed. Where it is greatly displaced, it is greatly extolled. Many are saved by Christ, in whom the change is not very apparent, and consequently but little fame is brought to the good Physician through it; but, oh, if he will have mercy upon yonder mourner, who has been these ten years in despair; if he will say, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmities," the whole parish will ring with it! If Jesus will come and save that black, ignorant sinner, whom everybody knows because he has become a pest and a nuisance to the town; if such a demoniac has the devil cast out of him, how all men will say. "This is the finger of God." Yes, a poor wretch brought back again, as the sixty-eighth Psalm has it, "from Bashan, and from the depths of the sea," is a splendid trophy to the conquering power of Almighty grace. God's great object is to glorify his great name; and, as this is best accomplished when his mercy delivers the worst cases, there is surely hope for those who sit in darkness, bound in affliction and iron.

Moreover, when they happily behold the light, such persons frequently become eminently useful to others. Their experience aids them in counseling others, and their gratitude makes them eager to do so. O sweet light, how precious art thou to blind eyes, when they are newly opened. You do not know what it is to be blind: thank God that you do not: there are some here, however, who painfully know what constant darkness is; it is a grievous privation: but when their eyes are opened, as they will be in another state, and they see that best of sights, the King in his beauty, how sweet will light be to them!

"Nights and days of total blindness
Are their portion here below;
Beams of love from eyes of kindness,
Never here on earth they know.
But on high they shall behold
Angels tuning harps of gold;
Rapture to the new-born sight;
Jesus in celestial light!

So, when the spiritual eye has long been dim, and we have mourned and wept for sin, but could not behold a Savior, light is sweet beyond expression. And, because it is so sweet, there is a necessity within the enlightened soul to tell out the joyful news to others. When a man has deeply felt the evil of sin, and has at length obtained mercy, he cries with David, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." John Bunyan's impulse when he found the Savior was to tell the crows on the ploughed ground about it, and he lived to do better than talk to crows, for day by day, from generation to generation, his works proclaim the Friend of sinners, who leads them from the City of Destruction to the Celestial glory. Zealous saints are usually those who once were in great

darkness; they see what grace has done for them, and for that very reason they feel an attachment to their dear Lord and Master, which they might never had felt if they had not once sat in the valley of the shadow of death. So, poor troubled ones, for these reasons, and fifty more I might bring if time did not fail me, there is hope for you.

III. But now, the best part of our discourse comes under the third head. THE TRUE LIGHT FOR A SOUL IN DARKNESS IS ALL IN CHRIST. Hear ye the text. "The people which sat in darkness saw great light." Now Christ is not only light, but great light; he reveals great things, he manifests great comforts, saves us from great sin and great wrath, and prepares us for great glory. He is, however, a Savior that must be seen. "The people that sat in darkness saw great light." Light is of no use unless it be seen. Faith must grasp the blessings which the Savior brings. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." We must see the Savior with a glance of faith, then have we light. Let us consider how clearly Christ Jesus himself is the light of every believing eye, and delivers the most troubled soul from its misery. In him is light, and the light is the light of men. Jesus personally is the day-dawn and the morning without clouds.

First, there is light in Christ's *name* for a troubled sinner. What is it? *Jesus*. Jesus, a Savior. I am a sinner lost and ruined, but I rejoice, for Jesus has come to seek and to save that which was lost. My sins trouble me, but he shall save his people from their sins. Satan annoys me, but he has come to destroy the works of the devil. He is not a nominal, but a real Savior. We know captains and colonels who have no troops, and never saw fighting, but not so the Captain of our salvation; he brings many sons unto glory. If a man is called a builder, we expect him to build; if a merchant, we expect him to trade; and as Jesus is a Savior, he will carry on his sacred business, he will save multitudes. Why, surely there is comfortable hope here. Do you not see the dawning in the name of Savior? Surely if he comes to save, and you need saving, there is a blessed suitability in you for one another. A prisoner at the bar is glad to meet one who is by profession an advocate, a ship out of its track welcomes a pilot; a traveler lost on the moors is delighted if he meets one who is by trade a guide; and so a sinner should rejoice at the bare mention of a Savior.

There is similar encouragement in the second name, *Christ*, for it means anointed. Our Lord Jesus is not an amateur Savior, who has come here without a commission from God; he is not an adventurer, who sets up on his own account to do a kind of work for which he is not qualified: no, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him, for the Lord hath anointed him to this work of saving souls. He is Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent. Him hath God the Father sealed. He spake not of himself, but God was with him, and in him. Why, beloved friend, now that I am in the light I can see a whole sunful of splendor in that double name Jesus Christ, and yet I fear that those who are in darkness may not perceive it. Whom God anoints to save, must surely be both able and willing to save the guilty. This name is as the

morning star; look at it, and know that day is near. It has such joy in it that misery itself ought to leap with holy mirth at the sound of it.

It is our delightful task to add that there is light for those who sit in darkness in our Lord's *person and nature*. Mark right well who this Jesus Christ is. He is in the constitution of his person both God and man, divine and human, equal with God and fellow with man. Do you not see in this fact the love of God, that he should be willing to take humanity into union with himself? If God becomes man, he does not hate men, but has love towards them. Do you not see the suitability of Christ to deal with you, for he is like yourself a man, touched with the feeling of your infirmities; of a human mother born, he hung at a woman's breast, he suffered hunger and thirst and weariness, and, dead and buried in the tomb, he was partaker in our doom as well as our sorrow? Jesus of Nazareth was most truly a man, he is bone of our bone and flesh of your flesh. O sinner, look into the face of the man of sorrows and you must trust him. Since he is also God, you therein see his power to carry on the work of salvation. He touches you with the hand of his humanity, but he touches the Almighty with the hand of his Deity. He is man, and feels your needs; he is God, and is able to supply them. Is anything too tender for his heart of love? Is anything too hard for his hand of power? When the Lord himself, that made the heavens and digged the foundations of the earth, comes to be your Savior, there remains no difficulty in your being saved. Omnipotence cannot know a difficulty, and, O sinner, to an omnipotent Savior it is not hard to save even you. A look of faith will give you perfect pardon. A touch of the hem of the Redeemer's garment will heal you at once. Come, then, and trust the incarnate God. Cast yourself into his arms at once.

There is light, moreover, in *his offices*, and, indeed, a brightness of glory which a little thought will soon perceive. What are his offices? I cannot stay to mention a tithe of them, but one of them is that of Mediator. Your soul longs to speak to God and find acceptance with him, but you are afraid to venture into his terrible presence. I wonder not at your fear, for "even our God is a consuming fire." But be of good comfort, the way of access is open, and there is One who will go in unto the King with you, and open his mouth on your behalf. Jesus has interposed and filled the great gulf which yawned between the sinner and his righteous judge. His blood has paved the crimson way; his cross has bridged each stream; his person is the highway for those who would draw near to God. Now, as Christ Jesus is the Mediator between God and man, and you want one, take him and you will have light at once.

You desire, also, this day a sacrifice, to make atonement for your iniquities; that also you will find in Christ. God must punish sin, every transgression must receive its just recompense of reward; but, lo, Christ has come, and as the scape-goat he has carried sin away; as the sin-offering he has removed transgression. Is not this good news? But I hear you say that your sins are too many and great. Do you then foolishly think that Christ is a sin-

bearer for the innocent? That would be ridiculous. Do you suppose that Christ bore little sins only? That is to make him a little Savior. Beware of this. Nay, but mountain sins, heaven-defying sins, were laid on him when he hung upon the tree, and for these he made effectual atonement. Is there no light in all this?

Moreover, to mention only one other office, our Lord is an Intercessor. Perhaps, one of your greatest difficulties is that you cannot pray. You say, "I cannot put a dozen words together; if I groan, I fear I do not feel in my heart what I ought to feel." Well, there is One who can pray for you if you cannot for yourself. Give him your cause to plead, and do not doubt but that it shall succeed. God grant you grace, as you see each office of Christ, to perceive that it has a bright side for sinners. I doubt not, light streams continually from every part of the sun to cheer the worlds that revolve around it; so, from the whole of Christ, there issues forth comfort for poor and needy souls. He delighteth in mercy. He is a Savior and a great one. He is all love, all tenderness, all pity, all goodness; and the very chief of sinners, if they do but see him, shall see light.

Once again, if you want light, think of *his character*, as the meek and lowly Savior. Little children loved him; he called them and they willingly came, for he was meek and lowly of heart. O sinner, could he refuse thee? Do you think he could give you a hard word and send you about your business, if you were to seek mercy to day? It could not be; it is not in the nature of him, who was both the Son of God and the Son of Man, ever to repel a heart that fain would cling to him. Until he has once acted harshly to a coming sinner, you have no right to dream of his rejecting you, if you come to him.

Think for a minute of his life. He was "separate from sinners," we are told, and yet it is elsewhere said of him, "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Friend of sinners was his name, and is still. Think of that self-denying life spent among the sick and the sinful for their good. And then think of his death, for here the light of grace is focused; the cross, like a burning-glass, concentrates the light and heat of Christ's love upon the sinner. See him agonizing in the garden for sins that were not his own: see him scourged with awful flagellations for transgressions in which he had no share: behold him bleeding and dying on the tree for his enemies; sufferer for iniquities in which he never was a participator, for in him was no sin. It must be true that God can save me, if Christ has died in the stead of the guilty. This argument has killed my unbelief. I cannot disbelieve, when I see incarnate God suffering for the guilty, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God.

"Sinners! come, the Savior see,
Hands, feet, side, and temples view;
See him bleeding on the tree,
See his heart on fire for you!
View awhile, then haste away,
Find a thousand more, and say:

Come, ye sinners! come with me,
View him bleeding on the tree.”

I wish it were in my power to convey the light which I see in the cross into the mental eyeballs of all my hearers, but I cannot; God the Holy Ghost must do it. Yet, beloved, if ever you get light, it will be in this way: Christ must be a great light to you. Nobody ever found light by raking in his own inward darkness; that is indeed seeking the living among the dead. You may rake as long as ever you will among the embers of your depravity before you will find a spark of good there. Away from self, away from your own resolutions, away from your own prayers, repentances, and faith; away to Christ on the cross must you look. All your hope and help are laid on Immanuel’s shoulders. You are nothing. Not a rag nor a thread of your own righteousness will do; Christ’s robe of righteousness must cover you from head to foot. Blow out your paltry candles, put out the sparks which you have vainly kindled, for behold the Sun is risen! “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Ye want no other light than that of Jesus: dream of no other. Give up self, give up self-hope, be in utter despair of anything that you can do, and now, whether you sink or swim, throw yourself into the sea of Christ’s love: rest in him and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you from his hands.

“Cast your deadly ‘doing’ down,
Down at Jesus’ feet,
Stand in him, in him alone,
Gloriously complete.”

IV. But, lastly, we would say to every poor soul in darkness, you need be in darkness no longer; for LIGHT IS ALL AROUND YOU: it has already “sprung up.”

What a mercy, my dear despairing hearer, that you are not in hell! You might have been there: many no worse than you are there; and yet here you are in the land of hope. This day God does not deal with you according to the law, but after the gospel fashion; you are not come to Sinai this morning, no burning mountain is before you, and no tones of thunder peal from it; you are come unto Mount Zion, where the mediator of the new covenant speaks peace and pardon. I have no commission to curse you, but I have distinct authority from my Master to bid you come and receive his blessing. On Zion’s top to-day ye have come to the blood of sprinkling; you might have been called to the blood of your own execution! No devils are around you, but an innumerable company of angels, who wish you well. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. Remember, dear hearers, that to-day the gospel command is sent to you all; you that are most despairing, you are bidden to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. “Prove that,” say you. I prove it thus: he bade his disciples go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; you are a creature, therefore we preach it to you. And what was the gospel? Why, just this: “He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned.” That gospel, then, comes to you—God commandeth

all men, everywhere, to repent. O what mercy it is that the light of the gospel shines around you still! Will you shut your eyes to it? I beseech you, do not so wickedly.

Moreover, the provisions of the gospel, which are full of light and love, are all around you at this moment. If you will now believe in Christ Jesus, every sin that you have committed shall be forgiven you for his namesake; you shall be to God as though you had never sinned; the precious blood shall make you as white as snow. "But that will not suffice," says one, "for God righteously demands obedience to his holy law, and I have not kept his commandments, and therefore am weighed in the balances and found wanting." You shall have a perfect righteousness in one moment if you believe in Jesus, "even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Happy is the man to whom Jesus Christ is made wisdom and righteousness, and he is so to every one that believeth." There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Ah," say you, "but I have a bad heart and an evil nature." If thou believest, thy nature is changed already, "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." "They shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them." He can change you so that you shall scarcely know yourself; you shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus; old things shall pass away and all things shall become new. He will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. "Alas," say you, "even this is not enough, for I shall never hold on in the ways of righteousness, but shall go back unto perdition." Hear, O thou trembler, these gracious words: "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from; me." And what saith our Lord himself? He saith, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." "But what, if I go astray," says one. Then he will heal your backslidings, receive you graciously, and love you freely. "He restoreth my soul." He will not suffer even his wandering sheep to perish, but once again will he put them in the right way. "Ah, but my soul-poverty is deep, and my wants will be too great." How can you say this? Is he not the God all sufficient? Has the arm of the Lord waxed short! Did he not furnish a table in the wilderness? Is it not written, "My God shall supply all your need?" He shall cause all grace to abound towards you. "Fear not thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord." "Ah, but," saith one, "I shall surely be afraid to die, for I am afraid of it even now." "He that liveth and believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "When thou passest through the rivers, I will be with thee." Death is swallowed up in victory. Having loved his own which are in the world, he will love them to the end. Thou shalt have such faith in dying moments that thou shalt say: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "But you do not mean *me*," saith one. I mean you that sit in darkness, you that are ignorant, you that are depressed, you that have no good thing of your own, you that cannot help yourselves, you lost ones, you condemned ones, I mean you. And this is God's message to you: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the

world through him might be saved.” “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” Oh, come, ye guilty; for he is ready to forgive you. Come, ye filthy; the fountain is ready for your cleansing. Come, ye sorrowful, since joy is prepared; his oxen and fatlings are killed, for all things are ready; come to the feast of love. But I hear you say, “I must surely do something.” Have done with your doings, and take Christ’s doings. “Oh, but I do not feel as I should.” Have done with your feelings: Christ’s feelings on the cross must save you, not your own feelings. “Oh, but I am so vile.” He came to save the vile.

“Come, in all thy filthy garments,
Tarry not to cleanse or mend;
Come, in all thy destitution,
As thou art, and he’ll befriend.
By the tempter’s vain allurements,
Be no longer thou beguiled:
God the Father waits to own thee
As his dear adopted child.”

“But I have been an adulterer, I have been a thief, I have been a whoremonger, and everything that is bad.” Be it so, yet it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. It is true that you are much worse than you think you are: you may tell me you are horribly bad, but you have no idea how bad you are: the hottest place in hell is your desert; but it is to you the mercy is sent; to you, O man, to you, O woman, to you who have defiled yourself with all manner of unmentionable enormities, even to you, thus saith the Lord, “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud and like a thief; cloud thy transgressions; return unto me and I will have mercy upon thee.” I cannot say more. I wish I had the power to speak, I was about to say, with the tongues of men and of angels, but I have such a blessed message to deliver to you, that I feel it need not goodly words, the message itself is all that is needed if the Spirit bless it. Oh, do not reject it, I beseech you, you guilty ones! you despairing ones, do not turn from it, put not away from you the kingdom lest you prove yourselves unworthy, and bring upon yourselves wrath unto the uttermost.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. Receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, now on the spot. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to do this, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 4:12-25; and 5:1-12.