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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at "Galeed"
Chapel, Brighton, Sunday morning, 18th June 1967

"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

11 Corinthians 4. v 6 & 7

In the preceding chapter the apostle shows the excellency of the Gospel above the ceremonial law. The excellency of the Gospel of life and liberty is more glorious than the law of condemnation. He shows too, how a people are delivered and the vail taken away. Inevitably when it, that is the heart, shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. Then He speaks of those who are brought into liberty. "But we all, with open face," with the vail taken off, the vail of unbelief, "Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

To my mind that last verse in the 3rd chapter expresses an amazing, sacred experience, and it is obtainable. To behold in the glass of the Gospel, revealed in the Holy Scriptures, the glory of the Lord in such a way as to be changed into the same image from glory to glory. We might well conclude that such an experience is heaven high above us, but here it is. "But we all", all those who have their eyes opened, the eyes of their understanding enlightened and the vail of unbelief removed from their hearts, and the inshining, the revealed light of the Holy Ghost, are capable of beholding the glory of the Lord, in such a way as to be changed into the same image. I know we might consider our experience, our religion, our attendance on the means of grace, our hearing of thousands of sermons, and we might look it through and say, I have never been brought to such a sacred experience as to be changed into the same image of the glory of the Lord. Well, my friends, seek for it.

I have sometimes said, and I feel it is warrantable to say, that every experience revealed in the Word of God as known by His people, is attainable by faith. So he opens this chapter. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, " not the ministry of condemnation, that was done away with in Christ, He is the anti-type of all the types in the Levitical dispensation. He has fulfilled all the prophecies, He has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel and, "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not". The inference here is that except for this ministry of the Spirit, we would faint, and this really is the secret of the 8th and 9th verses. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed, we are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed". Why, not? We have this ministry of the Spirit, we have revealed in the glass of the Gospel the glory of God, and that mighty God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, and that light shines through all the pathway of life, it shines in our troubles, it shines in our perplexities, in our castings down, in our persecutions and therefore, that light gives us to view things in God's light. But the 3rd verse is very solemn: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost". Of course, this speaks to people to whom the Gospel is preached, otherwise it would not be hid. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost". He shows how they are brought into that solemn position, "In whom, the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not". That terrible power of unbelief, my friends, it will bring a vail over everything. I feel more the terrible desolating power of unbelief now than ever I did in my life, and what havoc it makes in the soul. But

then he says, "We preach not ourselves", no, it would be a poor thing to preach, to preach ourselves, "But, Christ Jesus the Lord". O what a Person, what a subject to preach! "But Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake". Then he comes to this blessed secret. "For God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness". He shows the analogy between the works of God in creation and His work in grace. That it is the same Almighty God, but in a different work. I think it is in the 11th Psalm we have these two works put together. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all those that have pleasure therein...the work of the Lord is honourable". He comes from the works of God to the work, that one strange work that excels all others. But this is the same omnipotent God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness and it is to be noticed that light was created on the first day of creation, but the sun and moon and stars were created the fourth day. So light was created before the sun and it is so with respect to the work of conversion. First of all there is the light that is the day dawn before the sun arises.

I do feel that Bunyan put that very simply and beautifully in Pilgrim's Progress. It was poor Christian, he got out of the way with a burden on his back. He went to the town of Morality and Evangelist found him there. O what a mercy it is if the Lord should use the feeble means of the ministry for the edification of His tried people! Evangelist said to him, "Dost thou see yonder wicket gate?" he said, no, dost thou see yonder shining light? I think I do, follow that light and it will bring you to the wicket gate". Now all this manifestation and revelation in opening the eyes of poor sinners is contained in this text. For the same God, "Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts", and unless this divine light shines in our hearts we shall walk in darkness. We shall walk, if we do at all in religion, in the mere letter of the truth. O how essential it is to have a religion that consists of revelation! I feel it more and more. Revelation. It may be a word that would frighten some dear humble trembling sinner, but there is nothing to be afraid of. There is a blessed simplicity in revelation. Revelation is simply an uncovering, all mysteries need to be uncovered, to be revealed. I think we have said before, and it might give some instruction, that there is a great difference between a mystery and a difficulty. A mystery and a difficulty are not the same at all. You could work out a difficulty, but you cannot work out a mystery.

Now the whole of the Gospel is a mystery, and it is a mercy it is. A wise man naturally cannot penetrate it, it cannot be worked out as some difficulty can by algebra. Human learning can never fathom a mystery. But O the simplicity of it! If the Lord, the Holy Spirit, will uncover the mystery of the Gospel as it respects your own salvation and your own case, what a light shines, a knowledge that you will never lose. What you learn from men, that is of religion, can be lost, most of it evaporates. But what we learn by divine revelation and teaching is an anointing, it abides and teaches us of all things.

"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness". Now here is a blessing for a poor, helpless sinner that can do nothing, the Lord commands it. "Let there be light, and there was light", and as you read this, some of you who maybe "Feel after, if haply you might find God", O how it would rejoice your heart if the Lord should command the light of the glorious Gospel to shine into your heart, to shine out of darkness. There is another thing, light expels darkness, darkness cannot displace light, but light does displace darkness naturally. When the sun arises in the morning it displaces as the ascendancy of darkness. A poor soul walking in darkness, if the Lord should command the light to shine out of your darkness, what a blessed view you would have of the Gospel of His grace and all that it contains. To behold His glory in salvation. Then might we realise how essential it is to have a revealed religion, a revealed Christ, revealed truth, and you will feel it. Nothing else will enter because where there is a revelation of the Gospel that light so shines as to bring what it reveals into your soul and you assimilate it into your spiritual being.

"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness". I am thankful for that. He commands. He commands the light to shine. He commands deliverances for His people. He commands the blessing, even life for evermore. He shall be as a leader and commander of the people, and you will feel under a deep, deep sense of your need, that you need Him just as He is and what He is.

"For God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts". Well, some of you who fear God and therefore, have an honest heart, might feel, I really cannot say that He hath shined into my heart. What are you going to do then? Turn away from the text and find something else easier? The next best thing to an assurance that God has shined into your heart is the prayer of David, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me", that is the next best thing, and if indeed you are brought to pray that prayer by the Spirit, the time will come when you will be able to use the language of the text, "For God, Who hath commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in my heart". But I will tell you this, if you do feel that and you feel that the greatest thing you can do as yet is to pray "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacle", the light has shone. It might not be the full Son of Righteousness, but it is the Day Star, it is the Day Dawn.

"Hath shined in our hearts", and for this purpose, "To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face", or Person, "of Jesus Christ". The light of the knowledge. Knowledge is light, that is, spiritual knowledge. I believe we made a passing remark about this last Wednesday. "Add to your faith knowledge", and we said that one indication of your knowledge being by revelations is that it will bring into your heart the thing you know. What a blessing that is, to have such a light shine by the Holy Spirit into your heart, revealing the things of God, that you know Him and His things in such a way as they are conveyed to your soul, and you live upon them.

"For God, Who hath commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts". Not in our heads. It reminds me of that word in the Thessalonians: "The Lord direct your hearts unto the love of God", not your heads, your hearts. O how important it is to make that distinction and to realise it in our own cases, between the heart and the head. "To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the" person "of Jesus Christ. So it is the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ, and this takes in the whole Trinity. God the Father in His electing love, in His infinite foreknowledge, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the glory of His Person, the glory of His humanity, the glory of His grace, the glory of salvation. It takes in the glory of the Holy Ghost, that good Spirit, infallible Spirit, omnipotent Spirit in creating poor sinners anew in Christ, creating them new creatures, and that great miracle of the new birth. O what glory there is in the blessed Trinity! and when God commands the light to shine out of darkness, it is the inshining of the Holy Ghost. A new creature has new eyes, a new understanding, a new heart, new affections, living a new life. Has a different, new Object and end. What a radical change is made where the work of the Holy Ghost begins religion! and if He does not begin it my friends, and we are religious, our religion and end are utter confusion.

"To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ". The knowledge of it, and this is salvation, and if He should answer the prayer of the Psalmist, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation", He will fulfil this text. If He says to your soul that Christ is your salvation, He will give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ Jesus, and that glory is in the first place, the glory of His eternal only begotten Son. The eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ is a precious doctrine, and if it is revealed to you it will join you unto the Lord Jesus Christ, which would be impossible if it were not that He took human nature. There could be no union to Him without His human nature, and it does show to us the sacredness of the truth that that human nature is sinless.

It is denied by modern scholars, O how dark they are, the Gospel is hid to them, they are lost, they are ignorant of God, ignorant of themselves, ignorant of the truth, they might be D.D's or M.A.'s or what you like, they are dead. The Gospel is hid, they are lost. But has the Lord shined into your heart and given to you the light of the knowledge of the incarnation of God's dear Son? A knowledge of His Person? You will know it if He does. He will lay it in your heart as the Foundation of your hope. Sometimes you will feel to be joined to Him, and that is the only Foundation that will hold your soul. You will see too that that mysterious and blessed contact that He made with men by taking human nature, makes it possible for a poor sinner to be so united to Him and related unto Him as that nothing can ever separate them.

Now God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness and give the light of the knowledge of the glory of His dear Son, the Mediator. Do you apprehend Him? Everything in God is incomprehensible as to its essence, but as we have sometimes said, the blessedness of it is that what is incomprehensible in God is conveyed in His benefits to His people, and you will feel so the necessity of it that unless He was the incomprehensible God, He would be no use to you. A modernist's God is not incomprehensible, a modernist's God is the same size as his reason, what he cannot understand he does not believe. what a poor God! the same size as yourself, as your intelligence. But O this glorious Jehovah, I am thankful that He is incomprehensible, in His infinite Being, and yet possessible in Christ. I wish I could speak of it as I ought, but God commands it.

O you poor sinners who feel that you will never reach anything, well, that will not matter, if it reaches you. God will command it. "Hath shined in our hearts, to give the knowledge of the glory of God", and all His glory is in the Person of His dear Son, and this glory He gives to His people: "The glory that Thou gavest Me, I have given them". O we do need the Holy Ghost to lead us into the truth. That glory which was given to Him and He gives to His people is not His essential glory as the eternal God the Son, that glory can never be communicated to a creature, but it is His mediatorial glory. It is the benefit and consequences of this unspeakable Gift. They partake of the glory of His incarnation, partake of it in a way as a Substitute. Why there would be no salvation if it was not for the substitutionary nature of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. You think of it. It is a mystery, but O the simplicity of it, for the Lord to step in, if I might so speak, and make Himself a Substitute for His unworthy people. O the glory of it, and this is a thing to seek, my friends. Definite things, definite points, as to whether this blessed Redeemer is your Substitute or not. If He is not your Substitute, you stand alone, and you will be alone in that great day. You will have to answer for yourself, you will be charged according to your deeds done in your body, in the whole of your life. But if Christ is our Substitute, then it is -

"He instead of us is seen
When we approach to God".

and it will be so at that great day of judgement, because it was ever so, before the world was, and that glory will be revealed,

"Then in the glass of His decrees,
Christ and His church appeared as One,
Her sins by imputation His,
Whilst she in spotless splendour shone.

If the Holy Ghost reveals that, if He shows you His covenant, gives you to read your name written in heaven, O what glory you will behold, the glory of Christ in the Covenant of grace!

"For God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts". You can alter it, you can make it a prayer. God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in my heart, and reveal, the fulness, the glory of Christ, and communicate

to my soul out of His fulness all that pertains to life and godliness, that I might be made complete in Him.

"Hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". Then there is a glory of His work. It is a glorious work. Salvation is a work, and the great work that the Lord Jesus had to do was to fulfil the law. No sinner could fulfil the law. The Lord Jesus came. No sacrifice could satisfy the law, they did not in the ceremonial dispensations. "Not all the blood of bulls, nor of goats, nor the ashes of an heifer could take away sins", could never fulfil the law. But the Lord Jesus did. He came to restore that which He took not away, but that which we sinned away, He restored. O that inexorable law entered, it entered into all the work of the Lord Jesus. It scrutinised everything He did, it looked into it. The law was magnified, The law would never have accepted the Lord Jesus as a Substitute if it found in Him ~~or~~ one speck, one spot or wrinkle. The Law would never have accepted Him as Substitute if He was born as we were born, never. What a salvation this is, and the Lord will command the light to shine out of darkness into some poor sinners heart and make them wise unto salvation. O what illiterate people have been made wise unto salvation! Poor old Sukey Harley, why the Lord commanded the light to shine into her heart. She had far more understanding of the truth of the Gospel than the Archbishop of Canterbury ever had.

It is revelation, and it will have such warmth in it. When the light comes it warms, it illuminates, that is another word. The same thing brings to remembrance former days in which, "After ye were illuminated", after the true light had shone, "ye endured a great fight of afflictions. A natural religion would not agree to walk that path, not an illumination that will bring me to endure a great fight of afflictions, but the reason was, before they were illuminated there was nothing seen to fight against, there is nothing seen to fight for, but when the eyes are opened, O what a prize! Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, and you will know both. You will know what mighty enemies there are within to fight against and what a glorious eternal life there is to lay hold of and, therefore, the work of the Spirit in the exercises of your soul will be in this conflict. So that the life of a pilgrim is a life of warfare, but one sings,

"My Captain stood the fiery test,
And I shall stand through Him".

So that this glory has in it a fulfilled law. O if the Holy Ghost should show to you a fulfilled law, fulfilled on your behalf, you will behold the glory of Christ. Not a destroyed law, the law of God is holy and just, a destroyed law would bring no glory to God and no salvation to a sinner. But is there not something attractive to you that the Gospel contains the law as fulfilled, honoured, satisfied, and these things the Holy Spirit reveals to sinners. What amazing riches!

"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness". Out of darkness. Poor sinner, I know this text may appear very high and very difficult, but it is not if the Lord should command it. You feel all your darkness, but the Lord will command the light to shine out of it. You feel your wretchedness, but the Lord will give you with the Apostle to look out from your wretchedness and behold the glory of the blessedness of the Son of God incarnate, and you will say, "There is all my desire, all my salvation".

But we must leave it.

Amen.

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