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THY LIGHT AND TRUTH

SERMON

by

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Preached on Lord's Day evening May 20th 1928 in Galeed Chapel, Brighton,

Text: Psalm 43 v. 3-4

O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God my God.

The end that every regenerate person has before him is the glory of God. God is seen in some measure, at some times, by every living soul, to be a glorious God, a blessed Being, and the source of good, to know whom, and to enjoy whose communion and favour, is the highest height of satisfaction that any poor man can attain unto. No less an aim does God the Holy Ghost put into the hearts of His people. When God is seen to be what He is in some measure - and every ray of light that comes from Him reveals Him in a measure (and every ray of light that comes from Him reveals Him in a measure), then, in that degree, God is known to be blessed and glorious.

But we are subject in this mortal life to much and long darkness often, to many changes, to much poverty. We oftentimes lose much that we possess, as to the *feeling* possession of it. We cannot keep truth; we cannot retain comfort; we cannot hold fast the experience of light. Clouds and darkness oftentimes cover our poor souls, and make us wonder where the scene will end. Nothing short of an illustration, a fresh illustration of divine power, is enough to help, to comfort, and to deliver us from this darkness. Oh how dependent we are on God! How absolutely dependent for light, life, liberty, warmth, fruitfulness, on the Sun of Righteousness! Do we know anything of His warm influence? Do we know anything of the healing beams which He irradiates upon a sinner's soul? Or are there some here whose souls feel at times to long and pant for that mighty healing that the Sun of Righteousness is?

Let me remind you of God's promise: it will help you to follow the Psalmist in this prayer with some degree of hope and strength. The Lord himself has declared, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4 v. 2). It is a great thing to have, as the ground for a petition, the Word of God. All true prayer to God must be according to His revealed will; all praying in the Holy Ghost and by His divine intercession is according to the will of God, and sometimes the will of God in His blessed Word is an encouragement to a poor, fearful sinner in praying to almighty God.

"What Thou hast promised I implore."

(Gadsby's Sel. 942, fr. Gospel Mag. 1777)

It is a great thing, my friends, to lay hold by faith of God's faithfulness (you will know it to be so as you feel it, and feel your unworthiness of God's notice) - to lay hold of His

faithfulness in His Word, and plead for the fulfilment of that word in your case. And if I may so say (and I believe the Scriptures show it is so) the progress, the life, the pilgrimage of a child of God is largely in this exercise of praying, asking, begging, waiting, longing, hoping in the Word of God, and praying to Him in the name of Jesus. You can never have more blessing than God has promised; and I might say this, that no living child of God will be fully satisfied until he gets in his experience all that God has promised. He has not designed that His people shall be a *little* enriched; He has designed that they shall be *filled* with glory, with blessedness, with holiness, and with His love eternally. A little is had here, and people are taught to want it, to pant for it; and by lack of it, every earthly good becomes ill to them; they do not enjoy it, because they want something for their souls. God makes this world unsatisfying to His people. Not that they are not at times amazed at His goodness to them in His kind, temporal blessings and providential good; they sometimes feel amazed that the Lord should be so good to them in His kind providence: but there is no providence, no natural comfort, no earthly supply, no carnal joy, no legitimate pleasure that a child of God ever has, that will satisfy his soul. Therefore this prayer in the spirit of it often and often escapes the heart of a child of God: "Oh send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles!"

I said this morning that there was a great distinction between the light of nature and reason and the light of life. God uses His people's reason by sanctifying it. The arguments that the apostles and others used in the Scriptures, profound arguments respecting the gospel, are used by the divine Spirit through the reason and understanding of His people; but God Himself is independent of any of our natural faculties. This light of life, though not noisy, and though it does not make a great show, is an effectual light, and the truth of God sent forth by Him is effectual. Truth is a living reality in the soul, and *its effect is to lead and to bring*. It moves the person; it moves his affections; it quickens him in his race; it leads him where he would be; it directs him to the place where grace abounds. It is the only light and the only truth that *leads to God*. And we may, as we have wisdom given to us, discern between the light of nature and the truth learned by nature, and the light of God and the truth sent forth by Him to us, by this: whether that light leads and that truth brings us to God, or leads and takes us away from Him. All things of the earth lead to the earth; all natural things lead but to nature and to self. Fallen nature, carnal reason, can never rise above the earth; truth from heaven takes the sinner back to heaven in his heart's affections, where he would be; it gathers up his thoughts and captivates them. The light of life reveals God, and the sinner in some measure sees the glory of God, and that fixed his heart. And, my friends, we need this light. Great darkness attaches to this world; nights of thick darkness are the experience of the people of God; they are the subjects of trials, afflictions, many changes, many temptations, and many heavy fears. And there are times, not infrequent, when there is nothing in the whole earth that is to them stable, upon which they can fix their souls, or upon which they can stand with any degree of sensible strength.

You cannot count on the things of this life. There is only one thing we can really count on with any safety here, and that is the end of our mortal race, which is coming, and is fast approaching; and the day of God is fast approaching. If we build a nest, if we nestle down in any of the things - the best things - of this life, and are not exercised Godward, it will be very solemn for us. It is a great mercy to be disturbed, but we do not like disturbances, disquietment in the soul, such as the psalmist in these Psalms felt: "My soul is cast down within me" (Ps. 42 v. 6). But it is a good thing to be disturbed if and when we are disposed to settle on our lees, as we often are. We need, for our encouragement and comfort, the light of God to be sent forth to us, *to show us the covenant of grace*. Sometimes so distinctly may

a child of God feel the treachery of his heart, the dreadful unfaithfulness he is guilty of, that by the sight of it he really fears that he will apostatise, turn back, and not endure to the end. That is a very important scripture, which it would be well for us to be constantly looking at in our souls: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Mat. 10 v. 22). When a person really starts in religion by God's power, it is a solemn thing; but compared with later stages it is easy to begin; and to endure to the end will test and prove whether our beginning was right, whether we have union of a true and vital kind with Jesus Christ. A very solemn thing to be tested, a thing that we want to be proved on the right side, is it not? And yet how exceedingly careless men are oftentimes about this great point! But the people of God will not always be careless. The Lord will see to it that you are made careful and particular here, if you are His. He will stir you up from time to time, and make you seek fresh manifestations of His favour toward you.

One great favour is this: the showing to you of the covenant. What is the covenant? In this particular in which I am noticing it, it is the faithfulness of God. Oh my friends, when God, in His mercy to a poor seeking soul, shines with the light of His covenant upon him, it does mightily help and strengthen him in regard to the cause of his sinking – his own disability, his own treachery, his own unfaithfulness. The Lord will bring you by this light, a living light, to love Him for His faithfulness, and to trust Him for it. You will mistrust self. I have told Him lately more than once, that it is not His faithfulness that I doubt, but myself, for my own treachery. And when you feel the guilt of that treachery, and when you see that, unless the Lord does in mercy by His faithfulness hold you to the covenant you will slip out of it, then the faithfulness of God will shine in your heart. No ifs, no peradventures there, to foul the stream of divine promise and love and grace! This will not leave you to presume upon His faithfulness, if the light of God shows it to you. For always this light communicates sanctification to the soul. It makes a person not only trust the Lord, but fear and revere His Name, as you were desiring in your hymn:

"May I from every sin,
As from a serpent, fly."

(C Wesley, Gadsby's Sel. 1.059)

The two things cannot be separated. The salvation of a sinner in the covenant, that is, the justification of the ungodly by the grace of God made known, and the sanctification of that sinner, are inseparable. If you talk about justification, and have no practical knowledge of what it is to be sanctified, your talk is nothing more than words. Those who have enjoyed the peace of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ know that that is true. Would that we lived in that blessed experience when sin is hateful and Christ is precious, and when the things and ways of God are dear to us, and we run in them with enlarged hearts! But if you have known anything of justification, you know the effect.

The light and the truth are *the Person of the Son of God*. Ultimately every child of God will come to know this, and that every promise of God is yea and amen in Christ Jesus.¹ The object of the soul and the object of the trust of a sinner is the Person of the Lord Jesus, who possesses every blessing to bestow, and is the Author of eternal salvation. The religion of God is a religion that centres in His Person. It brings comforts, comfortable feelings and frames, victories over sin and over Satan, and sweet hopes about the future; it brings holy joy sometimes for mourning, into the experience of the poor mourner; but all of it comes from and centres in the Person of the Son of God. How we do need from time to time the Holy Spirit to testify in our hearts of Christ the Lamb, to shine into our hearts to give to us

¹ "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1 v. 20).

“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4 v. 6), to show us in the Person of the Son the truth of the Father, and the reality of the Sonship, and to show us that God has a goodwill toward men, that He has no fury against His poor people, and that God in His own eternal incarnate Son has adopted many sons, and will bring them by the power of the Lord Jesus and through the merit of His death to glory! The Person of Christ is the Foundation upon which the church is built, and every individual in it will sooner or later be brought into contact with the Person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He will fill your heart; He will satisfy your soul; He will give you enlarged desires, enlarged hopes. He will increase you on every side, because you will see that in Him your treasure is immense. But when He veils His face, though His fulness is the same, yet how empty we are, how dark! Do you know this? Do you know the difference between a general knowledge of Jesus Christ and the gospel, and fresh beams of His light, fresh testimonies of His Person and work by the divine Spirit in your souls, meeting your case, turning you afresh, bringing you afresh to the holy hill of God?

This is the way the Lord shepherds and gathers His people to Himself. How scattered we get! How far distant in our affections from the God we love or desire to love! We often get entangled with things, held down by twice ten thousand ties, cares, anxieties, guilt, and some earthly idols; we are scattered by them, confused, bondaged, darkened, and impoverished. And yet in such a case, in such a place, the Lord effects in His people from time to time that word, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Is. 45 v. 22). He says, “Return unto Me” (Is. 44 v. 22; Jer. 4 v. 1; Mal. 3 v. 7). “He that dwelleth under His shadow shall return” (Hos. 14 v. 7). What a blessing it is to have a return, to have the heart turned Godward, and to have a cry in the heart for the Lord to come and to demonstrate in your heart once again the power of His divine truth!

And let me name this, for there is a glorious light in it, and a solid ground to stand upon. Truth sent forth is *the ground upon which the child of God stands*; and I think this is indicated to us by what was said to Joshua, when he took the people from the hand of Moses by the command of God: “Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread, shall be yours” (Deut. 11 v. 24). Now when a word or a truth is brought into a sinner’s heart, it becomes a standing for that person.

Now let me name this great truth (it has sometimes so shone in my heart), namely, *the justice of God in salvation*. He is faithful in His covenant; He is just in His Son to pardon sinners and save them. Did your soul ever rest on that revealed truth: “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1 v. 9)? It is a standing, that God is just in justifying a sinner. A holy, sin-hating God is a just God in saving and pardoning and blessing a sinner. Now this is one of the glories that shine from the cross of Christ – the justice of God. And I might say this, for it relates to comfortable experience as well as being the foundation of it: the justice of God shines in the punishment of His beloved Son in the place of His people. It is the Lord’s purpose to make known the glory of His grace, but we shall never get to the end of it, never reach the fulness of His divine grace which is in Christ Jesus, “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Tit. 3 v. 11), the grace by which He transferred to His dear Son the sins of all His elected, loved people. And, my friends, when that truth is made known and shines in your soul, then you will see the justice of God in punishing His dear Son. A few weeks ago, that light so shone into my mind as to draw me, lead me, to the Lord Jesus, to love Him for suffering, and the Father for punishing His Son. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; though He was guileless, “harmless, undefiled, separate

from sinners” (Heb. 7 v. 26), He put Him to grief; He made His soul an offering for sin,² because by divine grace He imputed sin, the sins of His dear unworthy people, to Him. Therefore He suffered for them, and He suffered justly. Ah, my friends, if you see this by divine teaching, it will make your salvation important and glorious and just and precious. Oh the price that Christ paid in redeeming His people! And oh the worthlessness of the sinner who is redeemed - the worthlessness he feels attaching to him! And yet the Lord would love him, and did love him, so as to give His Son to be the Propitiation for his sins.

Now that will bring you to His holy hill, it will bring you to the place where this King is set;³ for it is the holy hill of God upon which Jesus is established King. It is sweet to come bending to the Lord Jesus, very sweet to feel your heart bowed down in humility, warmed in love, and enlarged in running to Him, thanking, blessing, adoring, and praising Him. This is what the psalmist wanted to do; and if the light and truth of God were sent forth to him, he said he would do it: “Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God my God” (Ps. 43 v. 4). This was what he wanted, and he confesses it to God. My friends, did you ever feel in your hearts a longing to praise God, and feel, with that longing, an inability because of your ignorance, because of your uncertainty and doubts and fears, because of your lack of experience, and because of your guilty distance from Him? I remember several years ago when that was my case, and I remember the hardness and darkness and fearfulness of my mind; and yet underneath all that there sprang up that longing to bless and praise and love the Lord, and I said to Him, ‘Lord, if I go to hell, I must love and praise Thee there.’ Well, through His mercy and His unchanging faithfulness I am not there, and I trust, in some very small measure, I have been brought to praise Him, to bless and to worship Him, and to own allegiance to Him. If you have in your heart a desire to know, love, fear, and praise Him, go on waiting and crying and praying for Him to come to you, to shine upon you, to make known His words and truth in your heart, and to give you an experience of the truth of His covenant - the truth of His covenant love, His redeeming love, and the blessings that are wrapped up in the covenant. These things you cannot get to know but by divine manifestation; for it is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2 v. 9), “for him that waiteth for Him” (Is. 64 v. 4). And the Lord will give them to you who ask and wait, communicate them to your souls, and bless you with a gracious ability and a divine warrant to bless Him in return. I believe heaven will consist in worship. Tirelessly, ceaselessly, eternally, the people of the living God will serve, worship, praise and bless Him. And heaven here consists in worship, not in formal worship, in what is called public worship; there is worship within worship sometimes; there is worship in secret, worship in the street, worship in your business. And when do you worship? When the Lord makes Himself known, when He communicates His truth, when He reveals by His Holy Spirit something of the blessings He has in store for you, and gives you a little foretaste of those blessings, in His heavenly peace and His divine love in your soul; *then* you worship.

We need Him also to give us light, and to grant us to know the way wherein we should walk.⁴ “Counsel is Mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding” (Prov. 8 v. 14) says the Lord Jesus; and He is called in Isaiah “Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God” (Is. 9 v. 6). It is a great thing to have a Guide, a Counsellor. We stand in a very uncertain pathway; we can never be right without divine counsel, and we often feel our need of that counsel. How can

² “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; he hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed ...” (Is. 53 v. 10).

³ “Yet have I set my king upon My holy hill of Zion” (Ps. 3 v. 6).

⁴ “Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee” (Ps. 143 v. 8).

it come to us? Well, it comes to sinners by the Word of God. Ah, my friends, that Word of God, the Holy Bible, is the guide of the people of God; and from time to time the Lord, the blessed Spirit, enables a poor sinner, by His holy Word, to know the way wherein he should walk; teaches him when to go and when to stay, how to behave himself in trouble, and how to wait on God; He shows him perhaps the wisdom of God in some affliction, and the propriety of waiting, and not making haste in some particular providence. We need the Lord to do this; we greatly need counsel. And will He give it? Will He be sought unto for it? He will: this is His name: "Wonderful, Counsellor." When one good man of old had a deliverance, and evidently a sweet manifestation of the Lord Jesus to his soul, which made him say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee," then, enjoying that, he said, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel" (Ps. 73 v. 24-5) through this wilderness world. It is as if a poor sinner should say, 'Lord, Thou hast promised me heaven; Thou didst redeem me by Thy blood; Thou hast declared that Thou wilt come again and receive me to Thyself; but I am in the wilderness, and I may have many steps to my grave. Guide me. I would be disposed of by Thee; I would take every step by Thy gracious counsel; I would be held up by Thy mighty hand. Save me from going anywhere without Thee. "If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence" (Ex. 33 v. 15).' This is the sanctifying power of divine truth. If the Lord has redeemed you by His precious atonement, made you His, and given you to feel the peace of that atonement, and to have a sweet hope at times that you will be found at last with Him in heaven according to His word, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14 v. 19); then you will long at such a time to live as if you belonged to Him, and to be disposed of by Him. And so you will consult the Lord. We are very wilful, full of stubbornness; and some of us know what it is to get great darkness of soul by doing some ordinary things without prayer. Perhaps some of you think that so long as it is not absolutely connected with the comfort of salvation, to pray about ordinary circumstances is unnecessary. Well, a child of God in his right mind would rather choose to pray his way in his life, in his duties, in his difficulties, in his changes, than to walk without God, even though he believed he would be safe at the end. If you have known anything of what it is to get to the throne of grace, you will want to get there again; it is a matter of choice sometimes. Alas for us, some of us know what it is to feel it a matter of irksome duty, and that is our wickedness; that is, when sin, carnality, world and flesh prevail. But in our right minds we would choose to pray; we would rather have matters that are difficult to deal with, to bring us to the throne of grace, than to have smooth things, and be left without prayer.

"O send out Thy light!" 'Teach me what to do; give me wisdom; give me strength. Keep me, Lord, from rebellion; save me from my own spirit. Let Thy truth be sent out to lead me to Thy holy hill, where satisfaction is.' If you come to the holy hill of God, and feel the sway of King Jesus in your heart, then circumstances and men will be lost sight of, as you were singing:

"Had I a glance of Thee, my God
Kingdoms and men would vanish soon;
Vanish as though I saw them not,
As a dim candle dies at noon."

(I Watts; Gadsby's Sel. 480)

You still see them, but you see them in God's light; you realise Him to be King. "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. 19 v. 6). That is the truth that men come to know, when they are brought by the light of God to the holy hill of God. And how different then everything appears! If you see and feel Christ in His rule, if you believe He rules for you and over you, everything assumes a different aspect – every circumstance of life, and all fearful forebodings; all is calm, peaceful. You can face trouble, look at it, face life, and be patient in

enduring the cross; you can face death; you can submit to God; you can love your enemies; you are in a right spirit. How often we get in a wrong spirit, try to manage, try to vindicate ourselves, and try to have our own way! But not when the light and truth of God are sent forth. They are so powerful that they satisfy, they sanctify, they draw, they fix the heart. There is a great deal of busyness in religion in this our day, which proves that we are for the most part far off from God. When you get to the hill of God, you will not want a lot of ornamentation and carnal excitement and busyness. I trust many of you know how obnoxious it is, and do not seek it; but I speak generally, and out of my own heart, because we are busy when we are far from God. Flesh asserts itself and religious activities grow when we are far from God, and innovations come in gradually. But when you are brought by the light and truth of God to the hill of Zion, you have a better occupation; carnal activities cease, and you will be sweetly occupied in worship, in prayer, and in humble praise. There is joy in true religion. God, known in this life by the light and teaching of the Spirit, creates joy, holy joy, in the souls of those who know Him.

“O God *my* God!” My friends, if this great and blessed, eternal God is yours, did you ever know Him to be so by the truth of it being sent forth to you? Did He ever claim you, and let you claim Him? Did He ever say, “I have redeemed thee ...; thou art Mine”? (Is. 43 v. 1) Do you *want* him to say it? Do you say, ‘Lord, come and claim me for Thy portion, and let me lay claim to Thee’?⁵ When He does it, the holy, deep, solid joy that will fill your soul you will never be able to express. Oh to be possessed of Christ, to have God as your God, His Father for your Father, and you an adopted son, redeemed by the blood of His incarnate Son, and the Spirit for your infallible Teacher, the Trinity for your God, all concerned in your salvation, and all His wisdom love, power, faithfulness, and grace exerted to bring you into holiness and happiness eternal! “God my exceeding joy.”

It is a solemn thing to be without “hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2 v. 12). If any of you are without God, living without prayer to Him, without seeking His face, without bowing the knee to Him, without reading and revering His Word, living without any communications with Him, any desire for Him, you are in a solemn, lamentable condition. O poor sinners! The world in wickedness, the world in religion, left of God, Christ not praying for them! They may have plenty in this world - plenty of possessions, plenty of happiness - but they are poor. O poor sinner, if you possess Christ, you are richer, with all the abundance of your afflictions and trials, sorrows and temptations, and the many evils that occur to you, than the richest worldling. Is God your exceeding joy? Did you ever feel in your soul that satisfaction that God was your God?

And let me say this one word in conclusion. This God, who is the God of His children, who makes Him known as “a just God and a Saviour” (Is. 45 v. 21), and sometimes satisfies the souls of His poor people here, this God will be their God for ever and ever.⁶ It will not end with this life. Sin will end; darkness will end, trouble and temptation will end; weariness and the opposition of the flesh – all these will end, but God will be the same. And we, if we are the Lord’s, shall have a capacity that we have not now, to know Him, to bless Him and worship Him, to enjoy Him and serve Him in changeless eternity. Do you want God? If you do really want Him, it is because He will have you. The Lord help you to wait on Him, to seek Him continually, and then the day will come when you will find Him and worship Him.

⁵ “Come, and claim us for Thy portion, And let us lay claim to thee” (W Gadsby; Gadsby’s Sel. 610).

⁶ “This God is our God for ever and ever” (Ps. 48 v. 14).

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