

A GOOD LIGHT

A SERMON

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“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believes on me should not abide in darkness.” John 12:46

IN our last sermon upon these words, we dwelt almost exclusively upon the several characteristics of faith, trying to point out what that faith is of which God himself is the author, and that it stands connected with the eternal salvation of the soul. There is not, apart from the words *God, Christ, Holy Spirit*, perhaps a more important word in the Scriptures than that of *faith*, or that of *believing*. Can anything greater be said, both ways, of faith? In the one extremity, if I may speak of it as an extremity, I mean when it is spoken of negatively, it embodies that which is very solemn, namely, that “without faith it is impossible to please God;” because where there is not faith you do not receive that by which he is delighted; and, on the other hand, another declaration stands, that “all things are possible unto him that believes,” because he that believes has the great God on his side; and if God be for you, then whatever is needful that he should do for you, or that he should enable you to do, it is possible, because it is God’s work; for the faith of those taught of God stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

There are three things more in our text which I have not yet touched, which I wish to say a few words upon this morning. The first is *the light*; the second is *the Lord’s delight therein*; and the third is *the world, wide proclamation*, “that whosoever believes on him should not abide in darkness.”

I notice, then, first, *the light*, after just reminding you that the form of speech here denotes that we are all of us in darkness, that we are the children of the night, and that that is a darkness, as far as the creature can do anything, that is everlasting; and our text shows the way out of that darkness into all that perfection of light in which we shall see our God in all his glory, and have fellowship with him forever. Let us, then, describe what this light is in the soul. Let us look at it, in the first place, as the light of the morning; “should not abide in darkness;” it implies the soul, then, coming out of darkness into his marvelous light. Let us look, then, at the feelings; let us look at the word of the Lord and see what the representations there are. And the first thing, then, is that it is the work of light to make manifest. So, this heavenly light, Christ Jesus, he makes manifest that which is essential to our welfare. It is said in the 32nd of Genesis that “there wrestled a man with Jacob until the break of day.” And when the Lord takes hold of a sinner, he is sure to continue with him until the daybreak; until heavenly and everlasting light shall break in upon the soul. Let us, then,

look to these matters. First, there was a man wrestled with Jacob until the break of day. It does appear that Jacob did not know who it was, or what it was that so got hold of him; and Jacob appears to have wrestled, struggled, and tried so to overcome this man as to get away from him, not knowing as it appears to me, who he was. And is it not just so in some cases, not all cases, but in the majority of cases, with the Lord's people. When the Lord begins his work in the heart of a sinner, that sinner does not know what it is that has got him. It is not everyone that is favored to understand that so early as did Saul of Tarsus; and he hardly knew for the moment; he said, "Who are you Lord?" there was a kind of confusedness about him. Here was Jacob, not, that this was Jacob's conversion, but I merely avail myself of the circumstance to represent the work of God with men. Jacob appears to have struggled to get away; and just so when a sinner discovers his ruined and lost condition, then he struggles to get away from his misery. And Jacob was, I may say here, and that will help me out with the thought, that Jacob was here under great fear of his life; he had heard that Esau was coming against him with four hundred men; and he was therefore speaking after the manner of men, in great fear of his life. He was therefore concerned and wondered who had got hold of him; thought, perhaps that this mysterious personage had got hold of him to detain him until Esau should come, and so his destruction would be sure. And is there not something similar in the feelings of an awakened sinner, who is in danger, not merely of his natural life, but of his precious soul; who is in danger, not of a fellow-creature coming against him with four hundred men, but he is in danger of all his sins coming against him; he is in danger, as he sees, of the threatening of God coming against him; he is in danger of the great God himself coming against him. Oh, any of you that can look back at the time when the fear was first created in your mind; when light first discovered to you your sins, and made you fear they would come against you, and made you fear the threatening's of God would come against you, and made you fear that God himself would come against you, you would then look around and say, "Vain is the help of man, for if the Judge of all be against me, then who shall plead my cause? If God himself does not plead my cause, then none other can." Here, then, is the fear; but Jacob's fear was natural; the awakened sinner's fear is spiritual; and he seems to have tried to get away. And so, the awakened sinner, oh, if I could get away from my sins; if I could get away from the threatening's of the Bible, if I could get away from myself. And so, the angel touched the hollow of his thigh, and his thigh was out of joint, so that Jacob was worse off than ever; he could not get away at all now. And just so the convinced sinner; he increasingly feels his helplessness; he increasingly feels his weakness. Ah, he says, I cannot get away. Presently the angel asks, "What is your name?" and Jacob was no doubt half afraid and half ashamed, and yet he felt he must tell; and he said, "My name is Jacob;" Now that name stood connected with all the faults of his life; and it is very likely, I was going to say, by the law of association, but I had better say by the power of the Holy Spirit's operation, when he mentioned the word *Jacob*, that would seem to bring to his mind all the sins of his life connected with his own name. Now, then, I have confessed who I am; here I am, a sinner, and I suppose, now I have confessed who I am, I shall be cut off. What is this but light? This is the beginning of light. So, with you and I, we have discovered our danger, and we begin to look about for a way of escape; and the more we try to get away, the worse we find matters become. But to Jacob's astonishment and infinite delight, instead of the angel following up his confession that he was Jacob, that name standing associated with all his faults, instead of the angel saying, Well, if that is your name, you are everything that is bad, and you must be cut off, instead of this, he says, "Your name shall be called no more Jacob." What, no more a sinner? No. What, no more guilty? No. What, no more reckoned bad? No. What, not one of my faults named? No. "Your name shall be called no more Jacob." Jacob means a supplanter, a cheat, and what is bad about you; this shall

be your name no more. What then is my name to be? Why your name is to be Israel; and it signifies “a prince with God;” “for as a prince have you power with God and with men and have prevailed.” And what prince was he like but the Prince of life, the Prince of peace the prince of our eternal salvation. You shall be thus called Israel. So, then Jacob got rid of his sinner-ship name, entered into his saint-ship name. Why said he this is a messenger from heaven; this is the Angel of the covenant. So, you will find in the 12th of Hosea that this same person is called an angel. “He had power with God; yes, he had power over the angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him.” Indeed, there are three names by which the divine Person is called. First he is called *man*, because it was a divine Person that appeared in human form; secondly, he is called *an angel*, because the word angel means messenger; and what sweeter message could he bring to Jacob than that of taking away his sinner-ship name and giving him a saint-ship name, yes, giving him the name of Jesus; I say, the same name that the Savior bears; for it is in accordance with what Paul said, that “after him the whole family in heaven and in earth is named.” Now this divine Person is called, then, a man, because he appeared in human form; he is called an angel, or a messenger, because he is the messenger of the covenant; but I know of no reason, I cannot find any reason, why the same person is called God, except it be that he was God; and so he was God; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And Jacob knew that while this divine Person appeared in human form, in order, perhaps, to set before him more impressively that the time should come when this divine Person should be made flesh, should tabernacle among us, full of grace and truth, and give his life a ransom for many; and that he is called an angel because he is the Messenger of the new covenant. Jacob knew he was a divine Person, for when the angel had gone, left him, Jacob called the place Peniel; that is, God’s face; “for,” he said, “I have seen God face to face.” I was called to my Judge, and my Judge has given sentence in my favor; I was called to the great tribunal, though I am in the body; I was called to the great tribunal now, that I may not be called to the great tribunal hereafter. I am thus chastened of the Lord that I should not be condemned with the world. “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved I am preserved, judgment is given in my favor; and he is of one mind, and none can turn him. He knows my future faults as well as he does my past faults; he knows my future troubles as well as he does my past troubles; he knows where I shall live, and how long I shall live, and how matters shall be with me; he has taken my sinner-ship name away and given me a new name; that name he will not take from me. And who would not glory in this blessed name? a name that gives us power with God and with men: power with God in prayer to avail and prevail with him from time to time for all that we are favored in faith to call upon him for, and with men, ministers have power over men to the conversion of their souls, and to the feeding and helping of the saints of God along. And also, all the people of God, they have power with God first, and then with men, power over them. Your mightiest foes, your Pharaohs, your Nebuchadnezzar’s, your Haman’s, your Goliaths, whosoever it may be if you have power with God, he has power over all men; and one with him you “shall stand fast on the vantage-ground of this glorious privilege, and that forever. And as though it was significant of the mercy that Jacob found, it is said that, as he was passing over the same locality, “the sun rose upon him.” Ah, poor sinner, if you are brought thus to receive the man Christ Jesus, brought to receive the Angel of the covenant; brought to receive him also in his deity, for you must receive him in the complexity of his person, then, though it may be but twilight with you now, the sun will soon arise with meridian splendor and your soul shall stand amazed when brought to bask in the sunshine of his presence. Ah, you will say, who would have thought that the rays of this mystic sun, would have shone upon a sinner like me, the rays of all that God is in his love, and mercy, and counsels? Jesus Christ, then, is the light of the

morning. May it be our happy lot to walk in this heavenly light, the light that is most precious. And to die in this light; while darkness beclouds poor old nature, and the cloud of death spreads thicker and thicker over it, precious faith sees through this cloud, recognizes, the light of God's presence and God's salvation; and it will then sing with the apostle, we may call it singing. "Though the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day."

Now Jacob, then, made supplication when he knew who it was; and so now, where there is true light there will be supplication there will be, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" there will be, "I beseech you, deliver my soul;" there will be, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions;" there will be, "Create within me a clean heart;" there will be, "Renew a right spirit within me;" there will be, "Cast me not away from your presence." Lord, whosever's presence you are pleased to take me from, do not cast me from your presence, "for in your presence is fulness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures for evermore. Cast me not away from your presence, take not your Holy Spirit from me." Is not Jesus, then, this light that shows us one way out of sinner-ship into saintship?

Second, he is that light that shows us the greatness and completeness of God's salvation; that is another thing to see, not only our way out of sinner-ship into saintship, but he shows us the greatness and completeness of his salvation, 14th of Exodus. When the morning began to break, light began to come; the Egyptians, the Israelites saw, were all destroyed in the morning, and it significantly says, "There was not" and how shall I utter the words: when taken in their proper mystic sense? "There was not so much as one left," Now go to the last chapter of Micah, and you get these words, "You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," "There was not so much as one left." If that does not endear God the Father, who imputed our sins to Christ, and Christ, who bare them away, and the Holy Spirit, who has revealed the same to us, then I know not what will. It was this that made the woman love much, it is this that has made the saints love much in all ages, "Not so much as one left." And it is said, "the Israelites saw that great work which the Lord did." Ah, my hearer, let me deal plainly, honestly, and affectionately with you. Have you seen the greatness of Christ's work? do you see that by his death all our sins were destroyed? and do you see that is a great work? Do you see that by his death the soul is delivered from the wrath to come? and is not that a great work? And do you see that by his death the soul is delivered from all thralldoms, and put into the way to the promised land? set free from the dragon of hell, his agents and powers and your face, toward the promised land? Yes, do you see that by the death of Jesus Christ your eternal possession of glory is sure? For the redemption of Christ and the redeemed possessing that glory are inseparably put together. The people saw that great work, so, if Jesus Christ be our light, we shall see the greatness of his salvation. And "how shall we escape", we may be very ceremonious, say a great many prayers, go through a great many forms, and follow with wonderful zeal, human device, but with all, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" If you do neglect this salvation, if that is not right in your eyes, if that is not the foundation of your hope, if that is not your plea before God, then the light that is in you is darkness, and you cannot escape. You must have a salvation, as I sometimes say, that embodies a surety for sin. Sin must be punished either in the sinner or else in a substitute; and if your religion does not embody a substitute, then you must suffer in your own person; but if your religion embodies substitute, and precious faith receives Jesus Christ in the greatness of his salvation, then that substitute, that surety, has paid the mighty debt you owed. I have nothing else to live upon but this salvation, I have nothing else to pray about, I have nothing else to preach about, I have nothing

else, comparatively speaking, to live for, I have nothing else to die for, I have nothing else to rise for; and this is all our hope of getting to heaven. The Old Testament saints were inclined to look at this great salvation as embodying the great God himself; hence the language, "Behold, God is my salvation." "The people saw that great work;" so if we are brought into this light, and he is the true light to us, we shall see the greatness of his salvation. "and they feared the Lord." Forgive me if I give you there the original rendering of the word *Lord*, because it seems to me to give emphasis. "They feared *Jehovah*." Without this great work they would fear other gods; they would fear Chemosh, Ashtaroath, and Dagon, and other gods; but now they saw this great work they feared Jehovah. and so, the sinner that sees God's salvation, he fears the true God, he reverences the true God, holy and reverend is his name. "The people feared Jehovah, and believed Jehovah, and" what is not less wonderful, "and his servant Moses." That is a wonderful thing. People in our days have got hold of a plan of believing God without believing his prophets, of believing in Christ without believing his apostles. Why, there are some such believers in Jesus Christ they would not even read the 9th of Romans, nor the 8th either. Now, then, they believed in Jehovah and in his servant Moses, so that the testimony of Moses was now so confirmed they believed in him. Indeed, you cannot rightly believe in the Lord unless you believe in his prophets, unless you believe in his apostles, for they are the testimonies that are to guide us as to what we are to believe, how we are to believe, and, I may say, the infinite and eternal advantages thereof. "I am come a light into the world." Blessed Jesus! by you, then, I transit from sinner-ship to saintship. "I am come a light into the world." Blessed Jesus! by you I transit thus from the territories of the great dragon, from the house of bondage, and from the scene of wretchedness, poverty, and privation, into that fulness of blessedness which is by Christ Jesus, to our eternal welfare and his eternal glory. It is the light, therefore, of transition from sinner-ship to saintship, from bondage to freedom.

But again, though I have taken so much notice in times past of the next point, I cannot very well pass by it, because it seems to come in to describe the Christian so nicely. Another saw in this light something else, a little in advance, if possible, of what I have said. And what kind of character was it that saw something a little in advance of what I have said, what character was it? Well, he was a man that was raised up on high. Ah, I see where you are this morning; one of your high doctrine men, I suppose, you mean. Yes. If you look at the 23rd chapter of the 2nd book of Samuel, there it is. "The man who was raised up on high." and if you want to know the meaning of it, you must go to Isaiah. "They shall dwell on high; their place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given, and water shall be sure." You must go to the 2nd of Ephesians, and there, I think, you will understand it; the apostle says, "He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." So, David was raised up to sit together with David's Lord, to sit together with that great High Priest of whom he speaks so beautifully in the 110th Psalm; no wonder he saw such things when he got so high as this. Why, my hearer, Jesus' salvation brings the poor from the dust, the beggar from the dunghill, and makes them to inherit a throne of glory. But he was not only raised up, but he was also "the anointed of the God of Jacob" the God that pardoned poor Jacob. Now, said John, "We have an anointing of the Holy One." What is the anointing? The truth of God that is the anointing. Oh, when the truth of God is made savory in us when it is made odoriferous to us, when it is made to us like alabaster box, like the rose of Sharon, here is the sweet anointing. Oh, there is a fragrance in God's truth, there is a fragrance in Jesus' name, that is to be found nowhere else. But, say you, he was "the sweet psalmist of Israel." So is every Christian. Every Christian a sweet psalmist of Israel? Never heard that before. Well, I think I am right. When the Lord makes you happy, does not our soul sing to the Lord sweetly? Is not

there a sweetness in the song of redemption which none but the redeemed can sing? Is there not a sweetness in his pardoning mercy? Is there not a sweetness in his interpositions on your behalf, when he has many times astonished you with his mercy and has been ten thousand times better to you than your fears, and your heart has sung for joy. You have said, Blessed God, what shall I say to this? Little did I think I should be one of the sweet psalmists of Israel. There is a reality, a vitality. Now, then, the Christian that is brought into this light, he is thus raised up to sit together with Christ, and in this light is anointed, and made a sweet psalmist of Israel. Many have great gifts to sing, and we are thankful for it, in the service of God; but that is not the singing I mean; I mean that kind of singing which some of you sing without moving your lips, sometimes when your heart is carried out in sweet affection to God. David says, "The spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue," or in my mouth. Say you, a great many have the word in the mouth, but how shall I know whether the Lord put it there? You shall know it by this reason, two reasons. First, if the Lord put it there, it will be sweet to your taste, very sweet. "Your words were found, and I did eat them; they were sweet to my taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." And these same words were eaten. Now when you eat food, that food becomes a part, as it were, of your very person; and so the word of God, if you receive it by the Holy Ghost, it becomes part of your spiritual existence, as it were; it is entwined with the very deepest sympathies of your soul, and you feel that every faculty of your soul is nourished by it, as I might prove were I to stop and give a kind of metaphysical description of the soul, which I must not do here; but it nourishes every faculty of the soul, and you live thereby. Well, say you, you seem to be going away from the light. No, I do not think I am I do not think this is darkness, I do not think so. But let us, then, come to the light. Now "He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning" then comes the light, "he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." If the psalmist, who well knew human nature, and well knew the tendencies of men, if he has stopped there, what hypocrites!, mind what you say; quite right, what hypocritical lectures we should have had about David's piety; for men would have labored to persuade us that David meant himself, that he was always just, and that he was always found in the fear of God, and that he was a morning without clouds when the sun rises, and that he was as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. No my hearer, do not be too proud to own that you are not that man; Jesus Christ was that man; he ruled over men in a perfection of righteousness, he feared God in perfection; he was as a morning when the sun rises without clouds; he was as the tender grass at his resurrection, springing out of the earth by clear shining after the storm he had come through, and the glories of heaven shone upon his victorious brow. No, said David, "My house is not so with God;" and yet it is that is his spiritual house. Here is the light then. What do you see in this light David? What do I see? Why, that "he has made with me", brought me into this relation to himself, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he makes it not to grow." Why, then, I suppose the psalmist means that this covenant is like an oak. When they cast their leaves, the substance is still in them. So, the holy seed shall be the substance thereof; though this covenant does not appear flourishing, to give me much enjoyment at the present, yet the holy seed, Christ Jesus, is the substance thereof, and therefore it must be eternal, it must be infallible, it much be ordered in all things and sure. "For this is all", what a creed! What a delightful creed! "An everlasting covenant, for this is all my salvation." I don't know how many articles there in the Pope's encyclical letter; I know it made my headache to read them; I wished the Pope I shall not say where; it must have made his head ache to make up such a long concern. I thought how

different is this from the holy scriptures. Come to David's creed, "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for" as though he should say. Do not blame me for making so much about it, "for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not grow." Now when Jesus Christ came to bring us thus out of sinner-ship into saintship; he came to bring in this great and eternal victory; he came to confirm this new covenant, this to bring us out of all darkness into everlasting light.

Now the second point I have to notice is *God's delight in this light*. Why, I make no hesitation in saying that if the zeal of the Saviors house did eat him up (and God grant it may eat us up more and more) while he was here below, it does not less eat him up now. He delights in this light; he condescends to speak, as it were, partly after the manner of men, and to see the people in this light, to see them in the transition from sinner-ship, and to saintship, and to see them in this covenant, and to see them as accepted in him; why, he is more delighted than I can describe. "Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" The Lord give me wisdom to speak with great care, for the sake of friends, and for the sake of foes too; or else the idea there is this, that the church, as brought into this light, and enlightened, that she is to him infinitely enchanting, that her charms to him are irresistible. He said, "Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me." What wondrous language! "Terrible as an army with banners." Your charms are irresistible. Would to God we could see a little more of this; how much more confidence we should have when we look to such a loving Savior, such a loving God, such a God of wondrous mercy. "Terrible as an army with banners." Charms irresistible. And her charms will never cease; no, she will remain the same; it is an everlasting personage; it is a holy personage; it is a righteous personage; it is a wondrous personage, glorious within and glorious without, arrayed in the light of the sun, the moonlight of the gospel to walk in, upon her head a diadem of twelve stars, crowned with prophetic and apostolic testimonies, charmed and carried by this church of God:

"Stands like a palace built for God,
To show his milder face."

There is something poetic about that; perhaps you are a little mistaken. Well, if there should be a scruple of that kind rise, it is my place to meet it as carefully as I can; and if you just go to Zephaniah, if you think that a little poetic in Solomon's Song, just go to Zephaniah, then we may come back to Solomon's Song again for a moment, if I can think of it at least. 3rd Zephaniah, "The Lord has taken away your judgements, he has cast out your enemy; the king of Israel even the Lord, is in the midst of you; you shall not see evil anymore. In that day it shall be said in Jerusalem, Fear you not; and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack, the Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty;" and he will do these four things; first, "he will save;" second, "he will rejoice over you with joy;" third, "he will rest in his love;" fourth, "he will joy over you with singing." The great God singing! look at the condescension, look at the love, look at the light, and look at the glory; Here, then is the Lord's delight in this glorious light; he delights in bringing us into the light, and we delight in being brought into it, and that the darkness is past, and the true light now forever shines. But I must go back to my favorite book again, Solomon's Song, because that is next door to heaven, that book is. I have said Jesus Christ delights in this; "Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon," meaning, of course, Jesus Christ, the word *Solomon* meaning "the peaceable one." Solomon in that book is represented as a husband, and the word *Solomon*

means “the peaceable one.” It is not every husband that is peaceable, is it? No; some are wonderfully quarrelsome. Now not so with this heavenly Husband, his name is Solomon; he is the peaceable one. Yes “Go forth, you daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown” the matrimonial crown; he has gained and won the heart of the church, and therefore crowned with success, “wherewith; his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals.” Here it is, “This is the day the Lord has made, everlasting light; and in the day of the gladness of his heart.” Thus, then, Jesus not only came into the world thus that whosoever believes and receives him in this order of things should not abide in darkness, but he did so with infinite pleasure and delight. This light, of course, is everlasting. All others must come to darkness. But it is astonishing in what a few years all the light and hopes of some of our fellow-creatures are taken away. What shall we say, then, that are brought into the light of that sun that will never go down? Let us hear a word upon the eternal certainty of this light. Not the light of the sun, for that will soon be dark with us all, nor the light of the moon, but “the Lord shall be unto you your everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor shall your moon” the gospel, for it is an everlasting gospel, “withdraw its shining; the Lord shall be unto you your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.” So shall the path of the just be as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Now just a word in conclusion upon *the world-wide proclamation*. “Whosoever believes;” does not matter what the character; does not matter whether they are old or young, or loved or hated, “whosoever.” Why, it is a world-wide proclamation. Go you into all the world, and tell every poor fellow creature that I, Jesus Christ, am come thus a light into the world, that *whosoever* believes in me should not abide in darkness. With this message the apostles went, and light shone, according to prediction, into the Gentile world; and God grant that this blessed light may shine more, more and more, in our beloved land. Now of course it does not mean that the believing is left to the creature, but it is put into this form first, that no sinner should be discouraged. You imagine that if you begin to have a little hope in the Lord you begin to exercise your mind with doubts and fears and godly jealousy, and you bring a great many reasons against yourself; and you say I do not think there can be hope for me, for I am this and that, and my life has been so bad; I have done, perhaps, what nobody else has done; it is a miracle I have not been transported or hanged, or something dreadful. I have been a wretch. Yes, but “whosoever believes.” Perhaps another says, I have been an upstart Pharisee all my days; I have paid tithes and fasted; there is not a blemish attached to me, and I am afraid that I have been that proud upstart Pharisee.