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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

A BRIGHT CLOUD.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 2ND FEBRUARY, 1868.

BY MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSLEY STREET.

"And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence."—ISAIAH IV. 5.

It is very clear that the cloud and the smoke here spoken of must be understood antitypically and spiritually, and we have the positive declaration that the Lord will do all that is described in the text. It does become us as Christians when we read such scriptures to look for their fulfilment, because the word of the Lord is infallible, and what he saith shall come to pass. There is an infinite advantage in clearly understanding God's truth, for it makes us so acquainted with him that we love him the more, trust him the more, we are more delighted with him, more satisfied with him, and the more assured also of our interest in eternal things.

I shall this morning, as far as I can, notice our subject in the fourfold form in which it presents itself. Here is first *the cloud*; secondly, *the smoke*; thirdly, *the illumination*; and fourthly, *the defence*.

First, *the cloud*. Where shall we look for this newly-created cloud? The holy scriptures are very clear upon it. The cloud here of course will mean the cloud of witnesses. Now when the Lord Jesus Christ came, did the Lord create a new cloud of witnesses or did he not? He did. All the witnesses, therefore, that you find in the New Testament form this cloud of witnesses which the Lord would create. And you will observe that this cloud is capable of being in every place at once:—"The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion;" so that wherever the people of God are, this cloud of witnesses is; and wherever they assemble, there also is this spiritual and sacred smoke, this new cloud which the Lord would create. This is a matter of essential importance, because if we are witnesses for God, we are his friends. Hence the Saviour saith, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Now as this cloud of witnesses is summed up in one part of the

* First sermon after four weeks' illness.

New Testament in a very beautiful manner, and in a way that shows that the witnesses both of the Old and the New Testaments to the grace of God are one, I do not know that I can do better than describe what their testimony is in substance, Jesus Christ himself being the chief witness; and let us see if we can come in and bear testimony of the same things. If so, then we belong to Zion, then we belong to God, and God belongs to us. The first representation that I will notice is that given in the 11th of the Hebrews. Let us trace out some of the testimonies of the cloud of witnesses there. In the first place, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." We all know that this sacrifice typifies the Lord Jesus Christ; and where the Lord intends salvation he identifies the soul with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is not anything more clear than this—that the Saviour was pleasing to God, that the Saviour was accepted of God; and if we are brought to know what Cain did not know, but what Abel did know—his state as a sinner,—and our need of this sacrifice of Christ, and of the all-sufficiency of that sacrifice, then we ourselves can bear testimony that such is our state as sinners before God that nothing can constitute us holy, righteous, just, and good, but precious faith in the eternal perfection of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the more we shall understand also how all the honours of law and justice are maintained. This is one feature of the testimony of the cloud of witnesses that shall be wherever the people of God are. Then if we go to another testimony, with which, perhaps, at first sight we may not seem so well able to join—it is said of Enoch, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." He was translated by faith to a brighter and a better world. Yet there is one part even of Enoch's experience that we can enter into, which is described in the 1st of Colossians, where it is said, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the powers of darkness." Now the business of the power of darkness is to hide from us our need of what Christ is, to hide from us the excellency of what Christ has done, and to hide from us that sure and beautiful order of things in which Christ is the mediator. The Lord hath delivered us from this darkness, and we see that he is the mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises. "And," saith the apostle, "hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Herein lies the preparation to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light—namely, being delivered thus from the power of darkness, so as to receive God's truth, and translated into his stable, his immoveable, his eternal kingdom, where we have eternal redemption and forgiveness of sins, not only according to the excellency of Christ's sacrifice, but also according to the loving kindness and multitudinous mercies of the blessed God. This is one sample of this cloud of witnesses, and the people of God in all ages are brought to bear testimony of the same thing. We cannot live to the honour of God, we cannot die with safety, and we cannot go to heaven, unless we possess these testimonies, the experience of which I hope to enter into a little more when I come to the third part of our subject. Now the Lord has said of his people, "None shall appear before me empty." How is that? Why, because each shall receive Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is that fulness that filleth all in all. Can we, then, bear testimony, by the Lord's mercy, that the sacrifice of Christ is that excellent sacrifice by which we stand before God without spot, or fault, or wrinkle, or any such thing? Can we bear testimony that there was a time when we were in darkness, but now he has brought us into the understanding of his truth; that there was a

time when the eternal redemption wrought by the Saviour was to us a mere hearsay thing, but that now it is the life of our souls; there was a time when the forgiveness of sins was a matter of mere hearsay, but now it has rolled into our souls like a tide of eternal mercy, which it is, has reconciled us to God, crushed every foe, given us the victory, and this God has become our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death. And if we come to the next testimony of this cloud of witnesses—that of Noah—"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear"—that is, with wariness, caution, and care; his great concern was to escape the coming judgment, was to share in such a covenant as God should reveal to him. So, there was a time when the judgment to come, that judgment that is yet to come, had no weight with us; there was a time when the very word *hell* did not alarm us—yea, perhaps we made it a part of our profane language, those who were accustomed to swear; there was a time when heaven had no attraction for us. But the time arrived when, by the mercy of the Lord, the weighty matters of judgment sank into our souls; we felt sin to be sin; we felt our state and condition as sinners to be awful to the last degree; we felt that it would have been better for us if we had never been born, than to live and to die without Christ; and we were consequently moved, severed from the world, testimonially condemned the world; we began to sigh for God, to pray to God, to look to God, and to seek God; and just as the Lord brought Noah, by the plan which He devised, safely through the Flood, so he hath revealed to us the dear Saviour as the way of escape from the wrath to come. This is the new cloud of witnesses; though it embodies the old cloud, the Old Testament cloud; they all bear testimony of the same thing. Another feature is that of the certainty of the promises. The Old Testament saints all died in faith; but then, before they died in faith they lived in faith, and such faith as you hear but little of in our day. We live in a day when there is so much said about the excellency of the creature, that according to a great deal of the preaching we now have, the doings of the creature far surpass the doings of the Most High. Go wherever you will, there is a wonderful deal about the doings of the creature;—admirable character, and admirable this, that, and the other. Why, they are all creature worshippers from first to last. Where God is the Teacher, he will overturn all that; he "will overturn, overturn, overturn, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is." Now, mark the faith in which these witnesses lived, and that is the faith in which they died. What did they look to? Why, what in our day you hardly dared to look at. What was their hope? Why, what in our day you must not lean upon too hard, you must not dwell upon too much. "They saw the promises;" they saw God's yea and amen, sworn, infallible promises, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and they looked with certainty for the fulfilment. And God would not disappoint them; for while they confessed that they were seeking a better country, which these promises described, and showed that the Lord was engaged to bring them to, the Lord would not disappoint them, for he had prepared for them a city, and into that city they all came, for they all died in the faith. And so I might go on to show their exploits; to show their sufferings, and to show the happy end to which they came. But whatever excellency you see in the Old Testament saints, you see the substance thereof in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was that new thing created, and he came into the world and bore testimony of God's love and counsels, and he wrought the salvation which he was appointed to accomplish. This appears to me to be the new cloud of witnesses; that is to say, those witnesses that God created, to the fulfilment of Old Testament prediction, as on the Day of Pentecost, and in the Gentile world. What a bright cloud of witnesses was there created. Whatever was said of the literal cloud no doubt receives in and by Jesus Christ a spiritual fulfil-

ment. If that cloud attracted them, so the testimonies of these witnesses attract the saints. If that cloud protected them, so the Lord protects his people by the testimonies of his word, as laws and statutes made in their favour. If that cloud illuminated them, so does the blessed truth of God illuminate our souls. If that cloud never forsook them, so the truth of God will never forsake us. And if that cloud abode by them all their journey through, so the truth of God will abide by us all our lives. Remember that while the main body of the people disbelieved God's truth, and fell in the wilderness, yet the cloud never forsook the people. What was the reason of that? The reason was this, that notwithstanding the unbelief of the many, there were some among them,—a remnant among them according to the election of grace—who continued to believe in the Lord, and therefore for their sakes the cloud abode. So the Lord will abide now. Men forsaking God's truth will not induce God to forsake his people. Men giving up his truth and running after something else, will not alter the mind of the Lord concerning his people. By the cloud he abode by his people then, and by the testimonies of his blessed word he abides by his people now.

Secondly, I notice *the smoke*. Now this smoke means four things. I think that scripture in Solomon's Song throws some light upon this, wherein it is said, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke." This is the Lord Jesus Christ working his way out of the wilderness, into which he came to bring us out. He came under the law; he came into all our solitude, our destitution, and our sorrows and woes, to bring us out. Therefore if Jesus Christ work himself out of the wilderness, and reached the promised land, thereby is the way made for his people to be brought out; and they are virtually brought out. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant;" to denote the fragrance and pleasantness of the Saviour's presence. But to be definite;—there are four things meant by this simple phrase. First, the sacrifice of Christ. It is spoken of here as smoke to denote its living power. The sacrifice of Christ is a living power in all the assemblies of the saints. We cannot be too assured of the living power of his blood to cleanse from all sin, to heal every disease, to subdue every foe, to bring every blessing, and to give us eternal life. We cannot be too sure of the living power of his atoning blood to maintain our cause before God. Look at it as the blood of Immanuel, look at the living power of his sacrifice—that "that precious blood," as you sometimes sing, "shall never lose its power," that this sacrifice shall continue in its power. I am persuaded I have never half preached it, and never half believed it, and never half understood it, and never half appreciated it. Satan cares not what we are busied about if he can but get us in any degree away from the excellency of the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then let us ask the question, What is the atonement of Christ to us? Is it a mere hearsay thing, or do we sometimes not only in private, but within these walls, realize an inflow of peace, of hope, of love, and the presence of the Lord in a way that constrains us at least to have a comfortable hope that this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death? Ever remember that this living sacrifice is deeper than hell, high as heaven, broader than the sea, longer than the earth. I have often said before, and I am not at all disposed to lower my tone, but rather to heighten it, that if you were ten million times twice told worse than you are, and had a grain of faith in the living power of the eternal sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ—why, your sins by the living power of his sacrifice would all become as the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and vanish eternally away. The triumph of his sacrifice is the triumph of Jehovah's counsel. He contrived it; it is the triumph of the eternal Deity of the Saviour; it is the triumph of the testimony of the Holy Ghost; it is the triumph of

all the saints of God. "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." The second thing meant by the smoke is the intercession of Christ. They were to take the coals to burn the incense from off the sacrificial altar, to denote that the intercession of Christ has its prevalency in the excellency of his sacrifice, and so have our petitions as well, which I shall have to attend to presently. Many times I have felt the eloquence, the softening, strengthening, and refreshing power of those words when you have been singing them here in this place,—

"For me He pleads the atoning blood,
For me the righteousness of God."

His sacrifice prevails with God. It is that which hath with the Lord an infinitely sweet savour; it always has prevailed, does prevail, and will prevail. Thirdly, the smoke also means the prayers of the saints. This smoke must be understood in the fragrant sense. Hence in the 5th of the Revelation you read of the living creatures that they had "every one of them harps"—every one of them had the truth—"and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." Jesus is the fulness of the hearts and souls of the saints. Do not plead anything else; reckon yourself to be nothing but a sinner, and reckon all you possess apart from God's grace to be nothing but sin, and let your heart be full, if the Lord enable you, and so favour you—full in prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence in the 8th of Revelation it is said that the angel at the altar, meaning Christ, offered much incense with the prayers of the saints. So then we have everything to encourage us at the throne of grace. David is of just the same spirit when he saith in the 141st Psalm, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." See how he here embraces the intercession of Christ, and then the sacrifice upon which that intercession is founded. Then the fourth thing meant by this smoke is the fulness of the presence of God in the church. Hence the last verse of the 15th of Revelation, "the temple," that is the church of God, "was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power, and no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." Those seven angels represent God's witnesses; and the seven plagues represent the completeness of the curse of the law. And if we enter into the church of God scripturally, it can only be by those plagues being fulfilled; and they were fulfilled in Christ. He took all the sins of all the people that were given to him; he took all the curse; he took all the plagues, and so by his finished work we enter into the church of God. Thus then we see that the Lord did, according to his own word, create a cloud of New Testament witnesses, and that that cloud is received in all the dwelling places of Zion; and where they are not received, or where they are received in the mere letter, but not understood, then those are not the dwelling places of Zion; where they are not received, then those are not the assemblies of the saints.

Thirdly, I notice *the illumination*—"the shining of a flaming fire by night." You observe this cloud and this smoke were to be by day, because the persons who formed that cloud of witnesses are children of the day; they are brought out of darkness into light, and because this sacrifice hath ended the darkness, and caused the true light to shine. But now, when we come simply to God's truth; then here is a night set in contrast to God's blessed truth. "The shining of a flaming fire by night." Now, the one thing so essential to our welfare and happiness here is the shining of God's truth into our souls. "The entrance of thy word giveth light." His words are words of light, and when the Lord is pleased to shine into the soul by his blessed truth, it puts everything right. I will tell you my thoughts a month ago, when my life certainly was on the balance, medical opinion was that but for my abstemious

way of living get over it I could not. I said to my medical man, "Tell me the worst; I am not afraid to die. No; all is settled, all is clear, all is well; the gates are open, heaven in prospect, Christ precious, God glorious—I desire nothing more. If I were in heaven now, I could not be more sure than I now am of my eternal salvation." Perhaps you will say, how did you get this? I will tell you. When I myself began to doubt which way matters would go as to my life, I began to look about, and the first thing I saw and felt was what a poor, helpless, sinful, wretched, miserable worm of the earth I was, in and of myself. I felt the Lord might indeed banish me to eternal damnation, and I could not say a word against it. I began to feel very solemn about this matter. Presently the words shone with a light above the brightness of the sun, and came into my soul like dew, like rain, like the healing ointment, from the 14th to the 17th verse of the 41st of Isaiah, "Fear not, thou worm." Ah, I said, then there is hope; and that picked me up. Ah, I said, if Jesus died for worms, if mercy save a poor worm, if grace save a poor worm, I am that poor worm; a heart-searching God knows that I see and feel myself to be that. I can make none of my past services, I can make none of my usefulness my hope—no; I must lose sight of all that, and look at what I am as a sinner, and let my hope be in him alone. "Fear not, thou worm." Ah, that took me up soon, and began to make me comfortable. Then the next word came, "Jacob"—"Fear not, thou worm Jacob." And so it went on, as I shall presently show, down to the 17th verse. When I came to Jacob, I thought, Well, I must look at this. So I stopped and looked at it, and other scriptures came with equal light, equal force, equal sweetness, so that really if I would have doubted I could not have done so. I do not think ever since I have known the Lord I have seen such grandeur in the everlasting covenant, and in the sworn promise of the great God as appeared to me when that scripture and correlative Scriptures shone thus into my soul. Ah, I thought, this is the shining of a flaming fire in this night of affliction. "Fear not, thou worm, Jacob." And I thought Jacob was a spiritual as well as a natural descendant of Abraham; I wonder what Abraham was in his own estimation. And the words came, and I could join with them, "I," saith Abraham, "that am dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord." Ah, I said, here is the secret. I will see if I can find in that same 18th of Genesis what the doctrines were that Abraham held; then I shall see what the people of God in all ages have been thus, taught their own emptiness, vileness, and nothingness; therefore that is the very reason why they were so delighted to receive and abide by God's living and eternal truth. So I thought well if Abraham thus felt that he was dust and ashes, he had room for what the Lord said in that same chapter. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment: that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." How did those words appear to me? I will tell you. The first ray of light that shone into my soul from the words I have just quoted was this:—"Abraham will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Ah, I said to myself, I saw it in a moment, it came with sweetness into my soul—there is Abraham's Greater Son, Christ Jesus: He kept the way of the Lord in perfection, and He Himself became the way we are to keep, He did justice in perfection; He died the just for "the unjust, to bring us to God." He did judgment—never committed an error from first to last, "That the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." Ah, then, I said, by Abraham's Greater Son the light must come, the mercy must come, the

blessing must come, the kingdom must come, heaven must come, rest must come, victory must come, glory must come, all that God has said must come. And I did not stop there. I could have preached then better than I can now, if I had had bodily strength, at least. Then I thought, the people of God are commanded by these truths, and so they are governed by them. I can truly say I am. I could not doubt it in my heart. I had a great many evils in my heart, but not one of them had the courage to take the truth from me, for it would have been of no use; I could not find it in my heart to rebel against one of these blessed truths. And the people of God also by faith keep the way of the Lord; and they do justice by believing in Christ, and hereby stand upon even ground before God, rejoicing that God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Also they do judgment, for the wisest thing that a man can do is to receive Jesus Christ and abide by him. Thus the Lord brings upon them all that he has spoken. Here is the light shining in the soul. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." So I felt I was right as to downward experience, and right as to doctrine. Therefore I am come out of the furnace if possible a higher Calvinist than ever, a more determined from top to toe free grace man than ever, for those who in themselves are poor worms are *men* as they stand in Christ, fear not thou worm, ye men of Israel, "I will help thee, saith Jehovah." "I will help thee." Why, I said, if the Lord says he *will*, then there is no conditionality:—"I will help thee, saith Jehovah." It kept repeating itself to my mind—"I will help thee. Then I said, what can sin do, what can the world do, what can my little bit of few minutes' affliction do; what can death do? "I will help thee." Then the words came,—"Who can hinder him?" I cannot describe to you the light that shone into my soul. I do not believe that Stephen himself could have died much happier than I should have done, if I had been called then from time to eternity. I do feel I have not followed a cunningly devised fable. I do feel that I have a personal religion for myself when I am shut up in the chamber of affliction; I do feel that this God is my God, that I have a place in His bosom, in His family, in His kingdom, in His presence. "I will help thee, saith Jehovah, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." "Holy One of Israel:"—what does that mean? said I. Why; it means that Jesus Christ in every possible sense is your eternal sanctification. Well, I thought, so he is: "chosen in him before the world was." There Jesus Christ is our sanctification. So Jude expresses it: "Sanctified by God the Father." What is election? Why, the first step in sanctification: he gave you to Christ, and set you apart from your sins. Then comes the mediatorial department: "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Then comes the regenerative department: "Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you." I have spoken you out of death into life. Then comes the reconciliational part, when there is the manifestation of pardoning mercy. Then comes the progressive department. What say you, do you hold with progressive sanctification? Not that of the flesh that men contend for, I do not hold with the Christian getting better and better in himself: I hold with the Christian getting worse and worse in himself, and knowing more and more of himself, and loathing himself more and more. The consequence is that he grows out of self into Christ, and Christ becomes progressively his delight as his sanctification. Then when you come to die, you depart this world in all the beauty and perfection of Christ; when you rise from the dead, it will be in the beauty and perfection of Christ. To all eternity our standing is infallibly good by the relation the Saviour bears. "I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter

them." I looked at it a little, and I thought, Well, I know what threshing is pretty well, for I worked at it when I was a boy, and it is hard work and dusty work; so is fanning and winnowing—very hard and very dusty. I thought, I shall have some more difficulties to overcome, more souls to be brought to Christ, more people of God to be helped along. Yet the mountains shall come down. You know what your difficulties are. You know what a difference there is between the presence of the Lord and the absence of the Lord. When you have the presence of the Lord, there may be a tremendous mountain, but by and bye it shall become as the chaff of the summer threshing floor. Well, just as I was thinking, Hard work, though, this, it will make one rather thirsty: the words came in a way that none but the Lord could bring them,—“When the poor and the needy seek water,” so I thought, Well, the Lord has given me a little refreshing in times past, so I shall not go on working without getting a little of the water of life now and then. “When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongues faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” There I was stopped. I wish I could, I feel I would give almost anything if I could set before you the grandeur that appeared to my soul from those words. “I the God of Israel.” There rose to my mind all at once such a manifestation of the eternal and indissoluble oneness of the Great Eternal with all His people—such a grandeur that I will tell you this,—I have been once or twice almost obliged to ask the Lord not to manifest himself too much. I have felt as though I could not endure it. Oh, my hearer, religion! what a difference between the mere formalities of men and hypocrites and the reality of that godliness that is received into the soul by a saved sinner. “I the God of Israel.” Ah, when I looked at Him in this sworn covenant, when I looked at Him in Christ’s mediation, in eternal glory, in His immortality, there appeared a grandeur and a glory, which I never can on this side of the grave express. Now, perhaps my experience this time may not be so profitable to some, because mysterious it is that I have had no casting down, no doubting, no fearing, no trembling, but light and confidence. God’s truth has been to my soul like the shining of a flaming fire. See the sovereignty of God. When I say no casting down, I mean not after these words came home with power, and not so much before that as I have had in times past. Now twelve years ago I had two or three weeks’ illness, and I thought,—I will send in my resignation; I have no business with the Lord; I am not his servant; I am not chosen; he has done with me; I cannot see my experience in the Bible; I feel a poor outcast, a withered branch; I have no power to pray; I have no access to God; I feel more like a demon and an infidel than anything else. And one Wednesday evening, just about the time the service began—I was too ill to attend, of course, but if I am ill at home I always think of you when the service begins, and like to be employed as near as I can when I am in my sick chamber in the same way as you are,—speaking and hearing God’s blessed truth, my heart going out with you;—it was so with me that evening. And I thought,—Well, the dear people are assembled, the Lord’s servant speaking, I will go carefully through the 41st of Isaiah—the same chapter. I got to the latter part of the 9th verse, and there I was stopped;—“Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.” Why, it came with such power that I preached at that time three months full in the savour of those words brought home with Divine power. I do not wonder, therefore, at living souls being dissatisfied when there is neither bread nor wine, when there is neither life nor power; for nothing else will satisfy those that are born of God. Perhaps I may seem a little egotistical in making these remarks, but I thought you would like to know where I have been to, and what I have been doing, and how I have

got on, and what sort of a testimony I have to bear concerning the truth now.

But if we branch out, then, into the words of our text—"the shining of a flaming fire by night," the night will mean in the first place the world. The world is a night. We were in darkness; we were children of the night; but God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, and brought us out of that darkness. Secondly, it will mean the night of soul trouble. Ah, when the soul is lying under a sense of wrath Divine, and the words come in,—“Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee,” what a shining is that! or in adversity, when with Jacob you have to say, “All these things are against me;” the Lord brings home some word with power, shines upon the path, shows that he is with you, and that these terribly crooked things shall come straight, that these threatening clouds shall pass over, and that he will never leave nor forsake you. Then the night of death. Ah, when we look at death, death is terrible to many Christians. I am sure some I have known, my heart has ached for them. Ah, I have thought, if I were in their state, and could not see my interest in God, what a terror death would be to me. Because, it is true that, as death leaves us, judgment will find us. This the Christian feels. And it is the lot of some of the people of God to be in bondage all their lifetime through the fear of death. But there shall be deliverance at the last; “at evening time it shall be light.” They cannot see themselves believers; but I can see they are believers; I can see they know their need of the truth; I can see they love the truth. But when we bring the question home,—Are you a child of God?—Ah, that I am afraid to say; that I cannot come to any conclusion upon. No, and you never will until the Lord himself shall bring you to that conclusion. We would desire to be the means of giving you, if it be but a little reviving in your bondage, a little encouragement; but you can never, no, never conclude that you belong to God, until the word is made spirit and life to your soul. Then again this flaming fire is descriptive of the living power of God’s truth. And it is my prayer, if I should be spared, that the Lord would make me more like what he says his ministers shall be—that his ministers shall be a flaming fire; that our souls may burn more with love and zeal, and have more life, more warmth, more reality. And many more things, did time permit, are suggested here; such as this light being an attraction. And this is a fire not to consume, but to preserve. The general character of fire is, to consume, but here is a mysterious heavenly fire of everlasting love, not to consume, but to preserve. Moses said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not consumed.” It was God there in his good will, in his loving kindness not to consume, but to preserve. Bless the Lord then, that by His living truth, His people are made lively. It is a blessed thing to be lively in the ways of the Lord. I am fully aware there is always a little danger of people getting into a wrong spirit. People have found fault with me for being sometimes a little lively in my remarks. Well; that has originated in the delight that I have in the ways of the Lord. In my illness, when I was at the worst, if you had seen me you would not have found me very melancholy—No. The shining of God’s truth will make the soul joyful.

I do not know that I dare scarcely meddle with the last part, *the defence*, farther than just to observe that the glory here means first the people of God, and secondly, everything that belongs to them. So that they are to be defended, and whatever promises, whatever privileges, and whatever blessings God has bestowed upon them, all are to be defended, they never, never can be lost.

Thus then we have living witnesses, the living sacrifice of Christ, living intercession, living prayers, the presence of the Lord, the shining of his truth, and the certainty of his word.