

# A GREAT LIGHT

## A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning November 30th, 1862

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At the Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road

Volume 4 Number 206

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Isaiah 9:2

NOTICE, in the first place, *that this light is great in value*; second, *that it is great in extent*; and third, *that it is great in duration*.

*It is great in value because it is of essential importance.* The Lord Jesus Christ, of course, is that light. And we have in this light everlasting life, and we know that to be of essential importance unto us. We have in this light, in connection with the life, riches that are unsearchable. Hence, then, said the wise man, “Happy is the man that finds wisdom”, that man finds wisdom that finds Christ as his eternal life; “the man that gets understanding”, that is the man that gets understanding that has such a knowledge of Jesus Christ as to know that there is no life like that eternal life which he is unto us, and which we have by him; that is the man that has understanding that so understands the truth that the various ways by which the Lord has made us his people, are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Well, therefore, might the wise man say that the merchandise of this wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Now, silver and gold are very useful, as we all know; and silver and gold are very precious to the man who is redeemed by them. A man in slavery and having no hope, having nothing but a life of wretchedness, without a comfort to look to, when silver and gold step in and redeem that man from slavery, and give him a life of liberty, unto such a one silver and gold are precious. But says the apostle Peter, we have something more precious than that; “For you are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold;” yours is not a mere temporal redemption; yours is not a redemption that refers merely to the body, and that reaches merely as long as your mortal life shall last; no, “You are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He has obtained for you eternal redemption. So that, precious as gold is to the man who is emancipated from slavery by it, yet infinitely more precious to the sinner must the precious blood of Christ be, that has redeemed the soul from the lowest hell, redeemed the soul from all iniquity, redeemed the soul from death and from all adversity. More precious than gold. The merchandise, then, of this heavenly wisdom is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. “She is more precious than rubies; all things you can desire are not to be compared unto her.” Now, that is the man, then, that finds wisdom, and that is the man that has something better than silver and gold, and better than rubies, and all things you can desire are not to be compared to it; that is the man that possesses these things, that is brought to know Jesus Christ as the way of life, and to know that there is a blessedness in that life that is to be found in no other life, and that there

are pleasures for evermore in this eternal life that is by Jesus Christ. And “that all her paths are peace.” Just look at that before I take the apostle’s explanation of this matter, “That all her paths are peace.” Is it so true, then, that our God is in and by Christ Jesus? that he is such a God of peace that all his dealings with us have that end? All the afflictions he may lay upon us, all the tribulations he may bring his people through, it is all to bring them into peace, it is all to bring them into those paths where there is that heavenly peace, that eternal peace, that peace described by the prophet Isaiah, when he says, “The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.” Surely that is a great light that shows a dying sinner the way of eternal life! Surely that may be called a great light in value that discovers to the poor beggar upon the dunghill unsearchable riches and eternal honors! Surely that may be called a great light in value that shows to a poor man, having the plague of the leprosy of sin, the man who is, spiritually speaking, full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, feels what a poor creature he is, that light that shows him the way out of all these plagues, all these diseases, healed, and everything become eternally pleasant; and the man that knows something of bitterness of soul, something of what real trouble is, to be brought into sweet association with that Jesus Christ wherein all the paths are peace. Let us hear the apostle explain, shall I say? or rather, give us his estimation of this heavenly light. He speaks of it in this way, that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, to know him as the way of life, and to know him as the way in which all our needs shall be supplied, and to know him as the way in which all the ways of God center, all the ways of God center in Christ, and they are all unto his own people, whatever they are to others, unto his own people they are ways of pleasantness. The eternity of his love to his own people shall become pleasant; electing grace shall, to his own people, become divinely pleasant; and so, all the parts of the everlasting covenant shall become, unto his own, pleasant. Now then, to be acquainted with this, so as thus to be saved from death, and saved from all the consequences of sin, the apostle might well say that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of such knowledge as this. “For whom”, for Christ Jesus, he says, “I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” Now let us hear what he says concerning the Lord Jesus Christ under this view of his being infinitely valuable, because essential to our eternal welfare: “That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” “Not having my own righteousness.” Bless the Lord for this! I hardly know what we can bless the Lord more for than for the freeness of his blessed mercy. “Justified freely by his grace.” So that we need nothing of our own; all we need is to come poor, needy, destitute. “Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ.” And then the apostle, to give us an exalted idea of this righteousness, says, “The righteousness which is of God by faith.” It is God’s own righteousness; it is Christ’s own righteousness; designed in infinite love, worked out and brought in in infinite love, for the justification of poor sinners. Who will not say, then, of this light of life, of this light of riches and honor, of this light discovering these pleasures and this peace, discovering this way of acceptance with God, who will not say it is a great light in value? How essential to our welfare! Then the apostle goes on and gives us a little more of his feeling upon this matter, and he says, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.” There is something clings to my mind in that request, something exceedingly Christ endearing to my soul in that idea, “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.” The power of his resurrection means two things. First, his mediatorial right to rise from the dead, on the ground of what he had done. Hence, he was brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant. The power of his resurrection, therefore, in the

first place, simply means his right to live, that he lives by right, by what he has done. And we are to live by the same right. In the first Adam we lost our right to live, and the sentence of death has come forth; and no man has ever been able to recover his right to live; for if any man could recover his right to live, he would not die, he would lose his mortality. But no man can recover his right to live. But Jesus Christ, having magnified the law, and having put away sin, he has established his right to live. That is one thing meant by the power of his resurrection, his right to live, and the right of every poor sinner is founded in the same thing, "Because I live, you shall live also." Then to know that Christ's right to live, and that there is no reason why he should die, sin was the reason of death, the cause of death, but that is put away; and if we are one with him, there is no sin imputed to us; but we, standing exempted by his righteousness from all condemnation, our right to live, which God himself has established, never can be invalidated until the Savior's mediatorial work shall lose its power. This right is a gracious gift; this right is the gift of heaven; God has given this right; God has established this right. And the more your soul is established in the delightful truth, namely, that Christ's power of resurrection means his right to rise from the dead and live; and that those who are one with him, that they rise by the same power, by the same right. The redeemed return by virtue of the redemption that he has wrought. "Your dead men shall live; with my dead body shall they arise." "Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs." There is something in that to my mind precious, when I remember that all my faults, and weaknesses, and infirmities, were they ten thousand times more than they are, cannot invalidate my right to eternal life, cannot invalidate that right that God; has given us unto eternal glory; heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Then the power of his resurrection also means the universality of his dominion. He rose into universal power. "You have given him power over all flesh"

Now, then, to know him in this power of his resurrection is to know him in that right by which he rose from the dead, that right by which he lives, and in the universality of his power. So, the matter simply stands thus, that if he be universal in his power, he is unconquerable; and if we are one with him, we cannot be conquered. There is no tribulation, there is no adversity, there is no circumstance that can bring about a separation from him; his power is universal. Hence the ancient kings and judges, as long as they ruled with propriety, obtained wonderful power, wrought great reformations, and did great things. But then most of those men had their dreadful, and some of them their fatal, drawbacks. Solomon, in the former part of his reign, did great things; but by-and-bye, such were the drawbacks, that everything fell to pieces, and the man who most gloriously established Israel was the man that rent Israel to pieces; all showing that the best of men are but men. What an infinite mercy it is that there is One that never did, never can, never will fail! and that one is Christ Jesus the Lord! The apostle, therefore, put not too high a estimation upon this acquaintance with Christ. He saw the greatness of this light, as though he should say, Here I see length of days; here I see riches and honor; here I see pleasantness without unpleasantness, and here I see peace without any trouble, and here I see that all things I can desire are not to be compared unto the righteousness of Christ, are not to be compared unto the power of his resurrection, my right to live, and the certainty that I shall live, by the universality of his power. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." The fellowship of his sufferings there I think means two things. First, to have fellowship with God by what the Savior has suffered; and the more we are led into that delightful truth also, that all the fellowship we shall have with God must be by what he has suffered for us, what he has done for us. If we have access into the holy of holies, it must be by the blood of Jesus; if we are made nigh, it must be in Christ Jesus, by his precious blood; if the Lord be on our side, it must be by what the

Savior has suffered. I think this is one thing intended by the fellowship of his sufferings. And the other is to be a partaker with him in suffering. "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; I have chosen you out of the world: you are not of the world; therefore, marvel not if the world hates you." So that if you are identified with his truth, and the world hates you on account of it, why, then you have fellowship with his sufferings. He was despised on the same ground, and you share in the same affliction, and bless God for it too, rejoicing that you are counted worthy to suffer for his name's sake.

"My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is made perfect in weakness; so, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after." Here is something to follow after; here is a life to follow after, and here are riches and honor to follow after, and here are true pleasures to follow after, and here is a true peace to follow after, and here is a ready wrought righteousness, the best robe, to follow after, and here is a power to follow after, and here is a fellowship with God to follow after, and here is a state of things brought about by the death of Jesus Christ to follow after. Now the Lord help you just, I was going to say, little ones, seekers, to take courage here. Notice the great apostle's words; why, he is with the least here of the household of faith. "I follow after." Well, if you are saying, I cannot yet rejoice in the assurance that I am born of God; I cannot yet rejoice in the assurance that riches and honor are mine, durable riches and righteousness; I cannot yet rejoice in the pleasure and in the peace of God as I could wish; I cannot yet feel sure that I belong to Jesus Christ as I desire to do, to be found in his righteousness; I cannot yet realize these things as I could wish. Well, then, the Lord help you to do as the apostle did. He was a great man, and yet, for the sake of the little ones, he became a little one, as he says, "I become all things to all men." And so now he says, "I follow after, if", he takes an if in to accommodate the little ones, "if that I may apprehend that for which also, I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." He saw that he was following after the right things. But those who are following after a perfecting of their own righteousness will never attain it; those who are following after eternal life in the wrong way will never attain it; for "many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." But those that are following after it by faith in what Jesus Christ has done, they shall not come short; they shall have this life, they shall have these riches and honor, they shall have this pleasantness and this peace; they shall be found in his righteousness, they shall be partakers of the power of his resurrection, having fellowship with God by what Christ has endured, and shall be thus conformable unto his death, and apprehend that for which they are apprehended of Christ Jesus the Lord. It is a great light, then, as to value. Let us have just one word more upon contrast. Now I take the man that does not see and feel as a sinner he needs Jesus Christ as his life; the man that has no plagues or troubles to render the peace of God that is by Jesus Christ the one thing needful; the man that does not see the infinity and eternity of the value of these eternal things; the man that does not seek to be found in Jesus Christ; the man that is not concerned about these things, now that man is in darkness until now; that man is dead in trespasses and in sins, and his state such that none but God himself can make him see or make him feel.

But I observe, in the next place, *it is a great light also because of the extent of it*. Bless the Lord, it is not narrowed to one point. And hence the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is in the 19th Psalm compared to the heavens. And we cannot have any doubt but the first part as well as the latter part of that Psalm has a spiritual meaning; for the apostle Paul takes up some of the very words in the 10th of Romans, which are given in the 19th Psalm, showing that the beautiful

paragraph there upon the heaven's points to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and is intended as a description of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without denying their applicability to the literal creation, they nevertheless, in my view, have a spiritual meaning. "The heavens declare the glory of God;" and where is the glory of God so declared as in the Christian heavens? where is the glory of God so revealed as in the heavenly truths of the gospel? Where such love? where such mercy? where such a manifestation of the blessed God. declared as in these Christian heavens, these new heavens, this eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, this firmament of the everlasting covenant? Then David goes on to show that this is a great light in the extent of it, that "there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard;" that just as the sun, and moon, and stars compass the whole globe, and all the population of the globe, so the light of the glorious gospel of the blessed God shall reach all that shall become inhabitants of heaven. "Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you," shall be true of all that shall be saved. And as there is no speech nor language where the voice of these heavens is not heard and read, so there is no part of the church wherein, if the sun represent Christ, Christ shall not be known; there is no part of the church, if the moon represent the gospel, in which the gospel shall not be known; and there is no part of the church, if the stars, which they do, represent the prophets and apostles, stars which the Savior is represented as holding in his right hand, there is no part of the church where these stars shall not be known. Every saved soul shall know Christ as the Sun of Righteousness; every saved soul shall be brought into the light of the gospel, that moon that shall not withdraw its brightness; every saved soul shall be brought into prophetic and apostolic light. And here comes the harmony of the whole of the saints of God. "There is no speech nor language," whether it be the speech of conviction, or of prayer, or of confession, or of praise, throughout the church of the living God. As there is but one sun for this world, so there is but one Jesus Christ for all that are saved, there is no other name; and as there is but one moon for this world, so there is but one gospel for the church; and the stars, the apostles, that shall shine for ever and ever. Now, "in them", in these Christian heavens, in these new heavens, "has he set a tabernacle", that is, a dwelling, "for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber." Oh, how expressive is this! Here the Lord Jesus Christ appears as the Bridegroom, he having loved the Church, and given himself for it. And, it is said, "rejoice as a strong man to run a race." He was the strong man; he was the God man. He did run the race that was set before him, with all our sins upon him, with the curse of the law upon him, with all the responsibilities of holiness and justice, with all the responsibilities of the everlasting covenant upon him. He ran the roughest road that ever was run; he ran the darkest path that ever was run; he ran where there was more opposition than in any other path that could be run; yet he could never be stopped, could never be turned aside, could never be made to stumble. He reached the goal, he gained the prize, he won the day, and is settled for ever, crowned with glory and immortality forever. Oh, then, it is that great light that should shine upon the Gentile world, and should reach east, west, north, and south; not shut up, bless God! either in the Vatican of Rome, or in any other system whatever. No, my hearer; here it is like the sun, it is no one man's property, it is universal. And so, Jesus Christ, he belongs to all his people, to all his brethren. "Him that comes unto me I will in no way cast out." It is, therefore, great in extent. And then it goes on to say of the Lord Jesus Christ, who thus has brought light, himself being the light, the light of life and eternal glory, into this our sin benighted world, it goes on to say of him, that "his going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it." How expressive is this! Take this in the law sense, and then take it in the gospel sense, and you will get the meaning. He began at the beginning of the law, and he ended at the end of the law. He was made of a woman, made under the law; and he is the end of the law for righteousness unto everyone that believes.

That is a scripture enough to charm the soul of any poor sinner that understands what a law condemned sinner he is, that Christ is the end of the law. Ah, how sweet to be freed from the law! Law-work is dreadful work, as every sinner knows that has been under it. Be under the law, and let that law daily find fault with you; conscience daily find fault with you; the Bible find fault with you; you go on promising and go on forming your resolutions to be more holy, and be more righteous, and get better and, alas! alas! the farther you go the worse you are. I know it was my case, till I was driven to distraction. Oh, I said, wretched nature that I have! And what a dreadful law is this! won't allow a wrong thought, a wrong inclination, or a wrong word! "He that offends in one point is guilty of the whole." What shall I do? what shall I do? I thought if I first obeyed the law, I should then be prepared for the Lord Jesus Christ. I did not then understand the meaning, and I don't know that I ever had heard the words of the poet,

"Come guilty, come filthy; you can't come too worthless;  
Come just as you are."

That is what I could not understand; but, in the Lord's own time, I did understand it, and then I saw that Jesus Christ had done with the law, was the end of the law, and that I could not get away from the law by settling matters myself, but by believing in him that had settled matters, and had brought in everlasting righteousness. And so, his going forth was from the end of this heavenly law, and his circuit unto the ends of it, from one end to the other; and so, I am dead to the law, and the law dead to me; and I am alive and have infinite liberty under the firmament of the everlasting covenant. And then, if you take it in the gospel sense, it will also stand good, that "his going forth is from the end of the heaven" he is the beginning of the gospel, "and his circuit unto the ends of it." And so, bless the Lord! the designed ends of the gospel, they all belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, then, we have an extensive light. Hence the universality of the mission given, "Preach the gospel to every creature." Bless the Lord! it is not confined to this point, that, or the other. No; there is a universality of light in Christ Jesus the Lord. It is, then, in the first place, great as to its importance or value, nothing like it; light, as John says, most precious; nothing so precious, nothing so pleasant as to see this Lord Jesus Christ in every way thus suited and adapted to our necessities. He, then, is the Bridegroom; and by virtue of his oneness with the church, he has come forth and given himself for the church. He is the wondrous Person that has run the race; and if you and I would gain the prize, if we would run with patience the race that is set before us, the race set before us is not a legal race, nor a race of works, but a race of faith. We walk by faith, and we run by faith. Jesus Christ is our Forerunner, and so it is by him that we run the race; for I could not go myself another step without him. It is by him that we continue; it is by him that we tarry by the stuff; it is by faith in him that we go forward; it is by faith in him that we rise with wings as eagles; it is by faith in him, as says the apostle, "through Christ I can do all things." And I am sure what he says is truth, when he said, "Without me you can do nothing." It is, therefore, a great light, because of its essential importance. And wherever the Lord intends salvation, wherever he intends to make men qualified, as we observed last Lord's day morning, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, there he commands this light to shine into the heart. They understand where this life is, that it is in Christ; they understand where the riches and honor are, they are in Christ; they understand where this pleasantness is, it is in Christ; they understand where this righteousness is, it is in Christ; they understand where the power is, it is in Christ; they understand where the conformity to God is, for to be conformable unto Christ's death is to be conformable unto God. No man is so much like God as the man that is conformed to the death of Christ, that is the man

that is more like God than any other man. Christ is the image of God; and if, by faith in his death, I stand before God, holy, pure, righteous, perfect, spotless, blameless, that is the character in which Christ stands, and he is the image of God. And so, it is said that “the house of David shall be as God;” they are as God, being like Christ Jesus, who is the image of God.

The man, therefore, that is thus conformed to the death of Christ, that is the man that is entirely to God’s mind, God’s delight centering in the death of Christ, centering in the achievement of the death of Christ. “Therefore, does my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” Here we see God’s face with joy; here we see the law fulfilled; here we see the promise fulfilled; and here we see the precept met; that whatever deficiencies there may be in us, in our feelings, or even in our practices; as regards the precept, and there is not a just man upon the earth that does good and sins not, we are all faulty some way or another; some in one way, some in another way; so that no one can boast of a perfection of preceptive righteousness, much less of a perfection of law righteousness. There is no real Christian, no Old Testament saint, and no New Testament saint, or apostle, that can boast of a perfection even of preceptive righteousness. But this we have in Christ. There we see everything; we see in this light the destruction of everything we wished to be destroyed, and we see ourselves in possession of all we could ever wish to possess. And then, as I have said, it is a great light also in extent. Now there are some of the planets, which we call stars, so far off from our sun that our sun is scarcely visible, and, indeed, not visible. Bright and brilliant as the sun is that illumines this earth, some of the stars or globes in space are so far off that you would not be able, with the unassisted eye, to see our sun, bright as it is, in those distant worlds; such is the immensity of the distance, that our sun dwindles away. But bless the Lord, while this is an astronomical truth demonstrated, I rejoice that no sinner can be far enough off to make Christ invisible. No, bless the Lord; a sinner may be afar off; Ah, he may say, there are such fogs and clouds of sin between me and God, and sin has put me at such an infinite distance, that I fear I shall never come near to him. Yes, the Sun of Righteousness is mighty, to penetrate the darkest cloud. The Lord comes in by the Sun of Righteousness, and says, “I, even I, am he that blots out your transgression as a cloud, and your sin as a thick cloud.” “I will not remember,” as the Lord says in another place, “your sin.” So that, bless the Lord, we cannot be so far off, but he can reach us. It is a light, therefore, as it says in the 19th Psalm, “And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” And I am sure each Christian will say, Well, were it not for this delightful truth, that Jesus Christ can indeed bring from afar, that no sinner can be so far off but he by his luminous power can reach him, you will say, I am sure he would never have reached me if it had not been so. And as the sun is seen in its own light, so Jesus Christ, when he is seen, is seen by his own light. “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me:” however far they may be off. Let the rays of Calvary’s cross shine and let the Lord bless a poor sinner with an understanding of what Christ has done, and it is sure to draw him near. It is a great light, then, in value, and a great light in extent.

But, lastly, *it is a great light also in duration.* How we should smile at the man that would undertake to extinguish the sun! Of course, we should have but one or two conclusions; the one is that he is jesting, does not mean what he says; or else, that he is out of his mind, and does not know what he is saying. And just so with this light, not only in the abstract, but in the relative sense of the word; bless the Lord, it never can be extinguished. Christ is the light; God is the light. “Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw its brightness; for the Lord shall be unto you your everlasting light; your God your glory; and the days of your mourning shall be ended.” Here, then, is something essential to our welfare; here is an extent of light not only to the

ingathering of many sinners, but an extent of light that brings to light such broad and extensive revelations of the great God. We are generally found fault with for being narrow-minded; we are not narrow-minded. They are the narrow-minded people that shut out some part of the gospel; they are the narrow-minded people that preach a gospel of uncertainty, that preach a chance gospel. We are not narrow-minded. We hold that by Christ Jesus the love of God is revealed in immeasurable breadth, in incalculable or incomprehensible length, in unfathomable depth, and in unmeasurable height. The revelation of our God is abroad revelation, an open revelation; it is not a mere few rays, to show us a few things; it shows us our God in the broad counsels of his will, infinity of his mercy, and boundless plenitudes which he has for his people to possess and enjoy. Now, we have in this chapter a beautiful representation of this light being great in duration, endures a great while, even for ever; and I cannot close without first referring to those words, where the prophet sees this light. He sees Jesus Christ first as a child, "Unto us a child is born." That seems very simple. Did time and space admit, I might have a scripture to every clause, and see how beautifully the Scriptures explain each clause. "Unto us a child is born." Come to Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, and take these words as the explanation, "Made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Ah, then, in this child I have a substitute, one standing in my law-place, a debtor to do the whole law, and so I am not a debtor to do any; he became a debtor to do the whole, I am not a debtor to do any. "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And thus, I rejoice in the holy child Jesus. "Unto us a son is given." Then you go to the 1st of the Hebrews, "God has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds," no, not *worlds, ages*; "by whom he made the ages," the ages of providence and of grace; "who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Ah, then, in this Son I get the shining forth of God's glory, I get the upholding of all things, no breaking down; I get rid of all my sins, he has put them away; and I am brought again to the point I just now touched upon, joint-heirship; he is heir of all things, and his people joint-heirs with him. "And the government shall be upon his shoulder." Adamic, Jewish, and human governments must break down; but shall the government of Christ break down? No; "he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."