

LIGHT AND PERFECTION

A SERMON

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“And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.” Ezra 2:63

IT appears that the second temple had not the ark of the covenant, nor the sacred fire from heaven on the altar, nor the symbol of the divine on the mercy-seat, nor what are here called the Urim and the Thummim; and yet the glory of the latter house was to exceed the glory of the former house, which could be fulfilled only by the personal appearance of the Savior in the latter temple. And, without all contradiction Christ's personal appearance in the latter temple, whether we view him in his infancy, when Simeon took him in his arms, questioning the learned men and giving them answers or whether we view him in his public ministry, in all these it was fulfilled that the glory of the latter house was greater than that of the former. Now as to the ark of the covenant, and the sacred fire, and the symbol of the Lord's presence, and the Urim and the Thummim, were not found in that temple, we must henceforth, after this period, take those things in their mystic, their spiritual, their gospel, their ultimate meaning. And hence, then, by Jesus Christ, we have in the spiritual sense, God's everlasting covenant; by Jesus Christ we have not merely the symbol of the Lord's presence, but the presence of the Lord himself; and by Jesus Christ not only is there the sacred fire, or the fire of God's righteous wrath, but that fire by the dear Savior is quenched, and quenched forever. And as the Urim and Thummim mean “lights and perfections,” so by Jesus Christ we have revelations and perfections; or as it also may be taken to mean, “light and truth;” for though both the words are plural, they may with consistency be taken in the singular, because it is not unusual with Hebrew language sometimes to use a plural word simply to denote the fulness and completeness of that subject of which it speaks; and hence some of our learned men translate these plural words in the singular; one calling it “light and perfection,” another calling it “light and truth;” and both of these interpretations are true and proper, and are found realized in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing that points to him to which he does not answer. He is indeed light; he indeed perfection. The word Tirshatha simply means a *governor*; and the word itself, Cruden says, signifies the overturning of a foundation. Perhaps this may be the case, and if so, it will apply very well to the gospel; for I am sure that all men naturally are resting upon a wrong foundation and the gospel comes and overturns them from that foundation and makes them feel that by nature

they have no foundation upon which they can with safety rest for eternity. So, then, if that be the meaning of the word it will also apply very well. You will observe here there were Levites that could not demonstrate their genealogy. It was only on the ground of their genealogical descent that they were to live upon the holy things, and so live on holy premises and live with God but as a genealogy could not be found they were as polluted, put from the priesthood, as our text says, "till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim." Now, while all this was true of the Levite's while the law required that they should be descendants of Levi we must take these things of course spiritually, that except we are born of God, unless we are true descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, unless we are true descendants of the great high priest, Christ Jesus then we cannot live with God and cannot eat of the holy things.

Now I shall look this morning, not so much at the words of the text, as I shall at the doctrine of the text; and the doctrine of the text is simply this (and we shall find plenty of scriptures to help us into the meaning of this interesting scripture), the doctrine of the text is simply this, that it is by Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ only, that we can have access to God. This is the matter, this is the doctrine, that I have this morning, then, to open up. The words Urim and Thummim I will take to mean "lights and perfections."

Now, first, as to *light*; and this answers to the people of God, for those who are born of God are called the children of light, the Lord having called them into his marvelous light. Now, in the first place, *this light stands in direct contrast to darkness*. Here we come at once to that vital experience that some of you cannot, perhaps, understand; and if you cannot, may the Lord convince you of your utter destitution of his grace, of the state you are in, and make you unhappy till he shall bring you into possession of the same. Now this light, then, I say, stands in direct contrast to darkness. What is the darkness under which by nature we are? Sin, sin is the darkness. When a sinner is convinced that his sin has darkened everything, here he is, a sinner in the first Adam, everything is darkened there; a sinner in his heart, everything is darkened there; a sinner in his soul and nature, everything is darkened there. Look whichever way he may, the clouds of sin appear, whether he looks within or without, on the right hand or on the left, towards hell or towards heaven, towards death, towards judgment, or towards eternity; let him look in what direction he may, sin appears every way to him. And when a sinner is made sensible of this, he sees and feels that he is in an awful case. Now where shall we go to for the light? The Lord Jesus Christ is the light. Let us hear what the word of the Lord says upon this, and we shall see that Jesus Christ is the light in the dignity of his person and in his sacrificial work. Hence, in the 1st of John, "In the beginning was the Word; and the apostle John is very careful to set before us the real dignity of Christ as God and man. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Here we begin to get a little light upon the subject. Then we go on a little further in that chapter, and we have these beautiful words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Now look for one moment at this. There is not anything you can do that can throw any light upon your path. Jesus Christ is the true light that lights every man, that is, every man that comes into the world that is truly lighted, it must be by Jesus Christ. Here then look at his sacrifice, what has he done, he has taken sin, he has borne sin in his own body on the tree, his soul was the sin offering; he poured out his soul unto death, he was made sin, he was made a curse, he took our hell, he endured the sword of justice, the wrath of

God and he himself did not cease to suffer, he did not cease to agonize, he did not cease to bear the burden, he did not cease to undergo the infliction of the penalties of our sin until the whole was endured and he said "it is finished." Here poor sinner is light, I say here is light you begin to see now here is the end of sin, here is peace with God that here I may look to God, here I may pray to God, here I might have access to God, here I may eat of the most holy things, here I may live with God and commune with God and talk with God and confess my sins to God and plead with God to be my friend, and tell God my troubles, and cast my burdens upon him, and enjoy his love and his approbation; here I shall be happy. Here is the priest, then, with light, the light of salvation the light of sins termination, the light of justification, the light of victory, the light of eternal glory.

Now let us go a little further and see how beautifully this matter is opened up in that very chapter in which I have referred. "As many as received him", this sin bearing surety; "as many as received him," in the dignity of his person, for that same chapter of John declares him to be God and declares him to be man that "the word was made flesh;" and then when he became a complete person, he is called then the only begotten son of God, full of grace and truth. What say you, my hearer, this morning? Have you a heart to receive him? Have you in mind to receive him? Have you a soul willing to receive him? Can you say, while the savior thus speaks, "Behold I come quickly", can you answer and say, Even so; Come, Lord Jesus, and rain in my soul; manifest yourself to me;" burst in sunder my fetters; bring my soul out of prison, and I will praise your name? Are you thus willing to receive him? Then, if so, mark the language; that, while he came unto his own, which scripture is generally interpreted to mean, he came unto the Jews, who were his own people after the flesh, but I see nothing wrong in taking those words in the broadest sense, for the Lord Jesus Christ is God, and he created all things, as that first chapter of John witnesses: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." So, he came to his own creatures, God manifest in the flesh, and when he came unto his own creatures, his own creatures received him not. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." They received him not. Yet some were favored to receive him; and now, mark the language, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; the word power meaning there, as the margin rightly reads, *right or privilege*. If you receive him, that is a proof that he has received you; for you never would have received him, if he had not first received you. He received you in the deep counsels of eternity; he received you at Calvary's cross; and having received you in the counsels of eternity, and receives you Calvary's cross, and suffered for you, will he reject you now? No. "But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." And how came it to pass that these persons received him? Did these persons receive him because it was their duty savingly to receive him? Did these persons receive him because the preacher impressed upon them their duty? To hell, from whence it came that such a doctrine be driven. No; the interpretation that the Holy Ghost gives is this of those that received him: "Which were born of God not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That man, therefore knows what he is as a sinner, and can receive this person, they receive this Lamb of God, can receive this as that which throws up on your path an eternal light, for it is an everlasting light: "The Lord shall be a path and eternal light;" for it is an everlasting light: "The Lord shall be unto you your everlasting light, and your sun shall no more go down", that man is born of God. That is the reason that some received him, because they were born of God, that is, because they were not converted by virtue of natural descent, they were not converted

by the piety of the flesh, they were not converted by the will of any man, however earnest that man may be, but they were converted by the living God, their conversion was of God. Here, then stands up the priest, with light and perfection. Here is not only light, but here is perfection. You see that his work is perfect, or else it could not answer to the preceding grand transactions. God, in the fixation of his love, has loved his people perfectly; in choosing them, he has chosen them perfectly; in ordaining them to life, there is perfection in that degree; and in that work that Christ has wrought there is perfection. Regeneration is perfect in kind; the Holy Ghost carries on his work to perfection; the resurrection will be an act of perfection; presentation at the last will be perfection; glorification will be in perfection. See how sweetly does their savior then, answer to all this. Thus, then, you have nothing else in our text but the doctrine of Jesus Christ's light and perfection, and that is the only way in which we have access to God. If I have this precious faith in Christ and can receive him then I shall not be put from the most holy things, the most holy promises, mark that, the promises of God are holy things; they promised holy things; the promise itself is holy, is in sweet accordance with the holiness of God, that promised being sealed by the Surety's blood. Hence, you read of his holy promise; and so, we shall be sustained by the holy promise, shall be consoled by the holy promise. There is no Christian but looks for the promise, even as we look naturally for our food. Yes, says one, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food;" because, whatever food I have however amply I may be supplied in providence, yet if I know not the Lord and have no promise from him, then all might go in the moment and my soul sink to hell. But if I am brought to receive Christ, and have the promise of God, and eat of the most holy things, then I am standing on holy ground, living a holy life, enjoying communion with the holy God, can give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, and rejoice that Christ is my sanctification. Now, here we can eat of the holy things. And oh, how sweet to have the promise of almighty power, the promise of almighty love, the promise of mediatorial, infinite sufficiency, the promise of infinite faithfulness, the promise of eternity, the promise of immutability; the heavens and the earth may pass away, but this promise shall never, no, never pass away. Here, then, is the priest that gives light, and brings in perfection, and brings poor sinners near unto himself. But without this priest, without this sacrificial light and perfection, what access can we have to God? what one holy promise is there we can reach by our doings? what one mercy can we ever have by our doings? No; it must be by faith in Christ; without faith it is impossible to please God; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Thus, then, my hearer, if you would receive him in this sacrificial light and perfection, then you are born of God; you are not reckoned polluted. You are polluted as a sinner, but his blood cleanses you from all your pollution, from all your sin, and he will not deny you any good thing, he will not withhold from you any good thing. This is the kind of character to whom the savior said, "Ask, and you shall receive." if you ask for bread, will he give you a stone? Or if you ask for an egg, will he give you a scorpion? No. And if you ask for a fish will he give you a serpent? No; this God is good, and his mercy endures forever.

Now, the manifestation of this priest, Christ Jesus, the great high priest, the manifestation of him, and the enjoyment of the presence of God by him, is that for which David prays, with, I think an allusion to this very subject. I think so; it comes very much to the point; and I think you will think so too, when I name the words, as though David alluded to the same subject of light and perfection by Jesus Christ. He speaks in this way, "Send out your light and your truth," and when did he do that? when he sent Jesus Christ. When he sent Jesus Christ, he sent light; light was coming to the

world, but men love darkness rather than light. And when he sent Jesus Christ, he sent the truth. "Let them," says David, "lead me." I like that; To be led by the sacrifice of Christ: why, you are sure to be led right then, "Send out your light and your truth; Let them lead me." And where will they bring you too, David? "Unto your holy hill, and to your tabernacles." If you are led by this sacrificial light, by this perfection, led by the Urim and the Thummim light and perfection, led by this person, you are sure to be led into God's presence. "Let, them bring me into your holy hill." You will feel that you have a right in the church, that you have a right in Jerusalem, and it will not be said of you, as Nehemiah said to the enemy; He said, "You have no right, nor portion nor memorial in Jerusalem." But if this be your prayer, if you are led by this light and perfection, then you have a right in Jerusalem, you have a portion in Jerusalem, and God is your portion and you shall have a memorial in Jerusalem for "You shall never," says the Lord, "be forgotten of me." And this light and perfection is a memorial; for Aaron was to wear the breastplate before the Lord for a memorial, and that continually. "Then will I go unto the altar of God." There it is. How carefully he speaks. It is not law work; they had had enough of that; it was not Pharisaic work; it was not ceremonial work; but "Then will I go unto the altar of God."

Well, and what will God be to you David by this light and perfection? Why, "My exceeding joy." No joy can equal that which he will be unto me by the sacrificial light and perfection. "My exceeding joy." How solemnly we are reminded of the contrast! Jeremiah speaks of this matter when he prays thus, "Be not a terror unto me, O Lord." I like that prayer exceedingly much; for when I cannot feel the confidence that David felt when he said, I will go unto God in this way, by this light and truth, this perfection, this altar of God, and God shall be my exceeding joy, I think it my privilege, if I can take the lower position, and say, "Be not a terror unto me, O Lord; for you are my hope in the evil day." As sure as you have that prayer also, if you cannot come in with full assurance, yet if you see that God could justly be a terror unto you, that he could justly be a consuming fire to you, that he could justly be an angry Judge to you, and that to eternity he could be a God of vengeance to you, and yet you have a heart to pray, in the name of Jesus, "Be not a terror unto me; you are my hope in the evil day. And David very much encouraged himself under the consideration of this light and perfection that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" How nicely these words come in! Why, look at the light the Lord sends out, the light that is in Christ. If you are brought into that light, "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" look at the truth that is in Christ; look at the perfection that is in Christ; look at the love of God, and see the fire there terminate descending upon the substitute the sacrifice. The sacrifice meets, endures, and is subjected to the fire, while the people escape. See the Saints rejoicing in God, he is their exceeding joy. "Why are you cast O my soul," seeing the Lord has done this for you? "And why are you disquieted within me?" I venture to say, that if the question had been put to him, "Well why then do you not make yourself happy?" he would say, "I see the way, but I can run only as the Lord encourages my heart; I see the way, but I can range there in and enjoy the advantages thereof only as the Lord brings my soul out of prison." "Well, what will you do then?" "Oh, I will still hope, hope in God. Hope you in Elohim, this sworn one, the three in one God, after this order of mercy; hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God. If I cannot praise him now, I shall by and by; for if he meant to destroy me, he would not have shown me those things. The gospel is hidden to the lost; it is not hidden from me; therefore, I am not lost. 'I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.'

If he is not my God in a way of assurance, he is my God in a way of hope; and if I cannot have him, I will have no other. I will abide by him, for he is God alone, and I have no hope anywhere else. Lord to whom shall I go? for you have the words of eternal life.”

I may, before I go further, just observe that there is great difficulty in ascertaining what the Urim and Thummim precisely mean. Whenever the Urim and Thummim in Exodus are named, the 12 precious stones in the breastplate are not named. The inference from this is that the Urim and Thummim, meaning “lights and perfections,” or “light and truth,” to note the 12 precious stones in the breastplate of the high priest. This appears very feasible, but, at the same time, we could not demonstrate it, so that we are not quite sure in what way the words are applied. Nevertheless, without our ascertaining that, we know well that, whatever is meant, the words mean: “light and perfection,” or “light and truth;” then we know that it pertained, in some way or other, to the breastplate of the high priest. And this breastplate of the high priest, is as you are aware, very significant. In the first place, it was square, the same as the altar was, the altar of burnt offering both in the tabernacle, and, in after ages, in the temple. It was square. What a delightful truth is thus set before us! Christ has made everything square; sin put everything out of square; Christ has brought things into square. So, the breastplate was square, to denote that he pleaded for the people that atonement that had made everything square. We are pretty often out of square, at least, I am, and I suppose the rest of you are. You are human, and you are sinful, and you are creatures of circumstance; and it is wonderful what circumstances will do, most wonderful. Circumstances are amazingly influential, and act upon us with irresistible power, in a great variety of ways; so that amidst all these adverse winds and waves, God alone can keep us at all in square, and in harmony with his truth, his fear, his love, his name, and the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. But bless the Lord! none of these deformities about us affect the altar or the breastplate. If they did but cleave to God, in other respects, they might have their faults, but there was the altar, always square, the breastplate always square, to denote peace with God. Everything was satisfactory. God was satisfied, and the people also shall, in this way, be satisfied with the goodness of God’s house, even of his holy temple. And then the precious stones represent several things. I will just name two. They represent, I think, the promises of God. And as the high priest appeared with these precious stones, so the Lord Jesus Christ entered heaven with all the promises. He had confirmed the promise; he entered heaven, and he pleads those promises to the Lord’s people, denoted by the precious stones, because the promises are precious. And as a precious stone brings a great deal, it is valuable, so the promises bring immense wealth, bring everything we can need. Perhaps Peter has some allusion to this, when he says, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.” And as the names of the twelve tribes were inscribed in these precious stones, so the promises of God and the people of God are identified; they are united; they are one. You never can sever them. God gave the promise to Abraham, and he became identified with God's word and promise in Christ. No separation, during the 175 years that Abraham sojourned on earth, no separation took place between him and the promise; nor can any separation take place between that poor sinner that has no other hope and is identified with the promise of God. And as these precious stones were on the high priest’s breastplate, and the people’s names in these precious stones, so there is nothing lies nearer the savior's heart than the promises of God, and the people of God, because in these two are included God himself, all his counsels, all his honors, and all his glory. And then, I think, there can be no question but that these precious stones denote the people

of God. The savior presents them before God. They are presented as precious stones; they are presented in that which grace has constituted them; presented to represent that which is valuable; and we know that there is nothing more valuable than the soul. And then, when we add to that idea that truth that our God esteems his family, his children, more, infinitely more than any earthly parents can ever esteem their children, we love our children sincerely, those of us that are parents, but still our love to them is as a passing vapor, passing away when mortal life shall end, in comparison of the settled immutable invariable love of the great and everlasting God. I think, my hearer, the gospel may well be called the good tidings, and good news, may well be called unsearchable riches. Here, then, without this priest, without a knowledge of this priest without a reception of this priest, we must be as polluted shut out from his holy promises and his holy presence; but if brought to receive Jesus, then we have, as the apostle says, boldness to enter into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus. Now, I have given a twofold representation of this. First that those that receive him, this high priest, he gives them right to conclude that they are the sons of God. You could not be more than that, Sons of God, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. Second that those sons of God that have not realized this, and are seeking it, pray for the upcoming of these advantages, light and truth, recognizing even in the distance, the advantage thereof, bringing them into God's presence, making him their exceeding joy.

One more representation, and then, I close. We go back then, for another illustration of our subject to the 33rd chapter of Deuteronomy, and we have there, first unition, then decision, then instruction, and then final victory, all by this wondrous person. We have first, unition: "And of Levi he said, Let your Thummim and Urim," your perfection, and light, and truth, "be with your Holy One," let it be with God; and so Christ, in the light which he is, is with God; Christ, in the perfection which he is, is with God. And so Levi was to stand with God; he was not to stand with man; not in the sense there suggested; because, if he stood with man, they would propose some alteration, as Ahaz did when he sent a pattern of the Assyrian altar, and had one made like it, which he reckoned to be much better than the Lord's altar; and he took the brazen sea down from off the oxen, and put it on the pavement; as some men now would take the gospel down from the pedestals of apostolic testimonies, and put it down upon the pavement of duty-faith and free-will. Take the hint. I am not giving the hint for the sake of advocating a creed, but for the sake of combatting a delusion. Now, his light and perfection were to be with God. Let your sacrifice be with him; let it be as he has appointed; let it be after his order; seek his approbation; let your light and your perfection be with him, stand up with him. So, Jesus Christ was with God, and it was his delight that God was with him. "You shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the father is with me," and I am with him; and he in me, and I and him; I in the people, and the people in me. Here is unition, conjunction, indissoluble union. "Whom you do approve," and this God you may well stand out for, "whom you did prove at Massah, and with whom you did strive at the waters of Maribeth;" In the very face of your rebellions he sent water out of the rock and saved you from dying of thirst. Let it be with him. So, my hearer, has not the Lord dealt so with us? In the face of our entire unworthiness of even the least of his mercies, he has heaped upon us the greatest, and goes on blessing and blessing, and will bless. Oh, what a wonderful person is this great high priest. Oh, these are ties that unite us to God. Let us be with him; Let us depend, not upon our faithfulness, integrity or anything belonging to us, but let our faith be entirely in the power of God; there we shall be safe and then comes the decision; "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not

seen him” well, you know, he did not hold with you so much about that perfection in the priesthood. I have not seen him. Well, but he wishes to see you, to make you a little lower in doctrine. I would not see him. What, go and have a private consultation with a man about being a little lower in doctrine, about moderating the matter? Why, you might as well ask me to go and see the devil and take his advice. I am as satisfied with Jesus Christ perfection as I am and more satisfied than I am with anything else I can name. If it were anything less than what it is, there would be no hope for me. “Neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor now his own children.” don't you see here the doctrine of the New Testament? If any man so love father, mother, sisters, wife, or brother as to give up for me for their sakes he is not worthy of me? That is the doctrine of decision; so that neither his children, nor his brother, nor his wife, nor any other creature, could move him from that decision in which he stood for God. So, Jesus Christ, for neither did Christ brethren, Christ’s near relations, neither did his brethren believe on him. You would think that where there are Christian parents, all the children must be Christians; But ah, not so, not so. It lies with God. We must pray to the Lord in and with our families, and do our best, and there we must leave it. “The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, to as many as the Lord Our God shall call.” We have every encouragement to pray to the Lord, but at the same time obliged often in deep solemnity to acknowledge that God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform. Nevertheless, if you are favored to leave a few simple earnest prayers at the footstool of his mercy, those prayers may not be answered in your lifetime, but they will be answered, perhaps long after you are cold in the grave. I have seen instances of the same. Let us, then, take courage. But while we are not to move an inch away from the truth for those nearest and dearest to us in the ties of nature, we, nevertheless, may pray for them, and when the proper opportunity offers, speak as well as we can to them. We ought to care for others, especially those of our own household; we should be worse than infidels if we did not, says the apostle. How is it they were so decided? “They have observed your word;” not observed the winds and waves; for “he that observes the wind shall not sow; he that observers the clouds shall not reap;” but “they have observed your word.” Which way does your word run? What does your word say? What says the Lord? “And they have kept your covenant;” there it stands. And the consequences, that the services of these decided people are acceptable. “They,” who are thus decided, “shall put incense before you and burnt offerings upon your altar.” God does not accept the wavering servant, he accepts the decided servant, the man that comes to him with a decided heart, not with a double heart, but who is decided for the truth as it is in Jesus. Our text, my hearers, taken in the spiritual sense is most solemn. To be shut out as polluted from the holy promise and the holy presence of God is to be eternally lost. We must, in order to see his face with joy, be conformed to the image of his great of the great high priest, partake of his spirit, and walk with God, stand out decided for God; and our services will be thus accepted as evidence that we belong to the Lord. And then this high priest was to instruct. It is said of Levi, “they shall teach Jacob your judgments, and Israel your law.” and so it is, that by Jesus Christ we learn judgment, and by him rightly decide in judgment; it is by him, and his light, we can judge rightly, and by him we have the law of liberty, that is the law which the great high priest teaches.

But lastly here is final victory. I can say nothing about living with God, we have no time for that now; but here is the final victory concerning this great high priest. “Bless, Lord, his substance.”

Has not God done so? Was not Christ substantial work a blessing to the Old Testament saints?
Was it not blessed on the day of Pentecost? Has it not been a blessing from that day to this?