

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A MORNING WITHOUT CLOUDS.

A Sermon

BY

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"A morning without clouds."—2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

DAVID is at the head of this chapter a representation of all the people of God; he is raised up on high; so every one who is born of the Spirit is raised up by the atonement and righteousness of Christ Jesus; even as the beggar is lifted up from the dunghill, and as the poor out of the dust, and made to inherit that life, and light, and glory, which can be only by faith in him in whom they are complete and accepted. David was the anointed of the God of Jacob: so are all who have the spirit of Christ. This anointing means consecration to God; and in, and by which, anointing, they know all things essential to salvation. Also David is called "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." He was indeed the poet of the Hebrew nation. But all the people of God shall be sweet singers of Israel: God and salvation their theme; their theme is, indeed, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; truly with them the bitterness of death is past, and they are passed from death unto life—a life of eternal delight. We have also at the head of this chapter a beautiful representation of the Holy and Eternal Three—Father, Word, and Holy Ghost: the Holy Spirit as the revealer of eternal things—"the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue;" and then here is God the Father in decisive declaration—"The God of Israel said, He hath said, and shall he not do? he hath spoken, shall he not make it good?" And then we have the Saviour, and David in sweet fellowship with him; "The Rock of Israel spake to me, and shewed me the way to prosper; he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." And unto none do these words apply as unto the Son of God: he was that Just One, that died for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; he feared God in perfection, and did *always* those things that pleased him. Can we say this of ourselves? We cannot, for there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not; but he did no sin,

neither was guile found in his mouth; he is, therefore, as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, and as fresh as new grass springing out of the earth; by clear shining after rain, he is "a morning without clouds;" and is thus a pattern of what all the mystic morning stars shall be.

I notice then, first, *the morning with clouds*; and, second, *the morning without clouds*.

I. It was when Adam fell a MORNING WITH CLOUDS. Sin came in as a cloud, a thick cloud, a tempestuous cloud, a gloomy cloud; what is there that sin does not darken? it has filled us with darkness, it has filled us with ignorance, and so alienated us from the life of God, and made us one with the prince of darkness. And this cloud of darkness is universal—all are involved therein, all are encompassed thereby; no light from any quarter, but darkness every way—a darkness which hides from us our state as sinners: darkness which hides from us the purity and majesty of the law of God; a darkness which hides from us the true meaning of the Gospel of God; and so the Gospel of the true grace of God remains hid to them that are lost. And we, by nature, love this darkness, and hereby *prove* ourselves to be under condemnation; we hate the light, especially the Gospel light: let regeneration, and redemption, and eternal election, be set forth in their vitality and true order, and we fly from such light! We cannot endure the true light! But let the false light of a free-will or duty-faith Gospel be set forth, then we are not offended; for such light is nothing but darkness; but the true light is what we hate; this is our *evidential* condemnation. Just as love to the true light of the true grace of God is our evidential salvation, so our hatred to the light is our evidential condemnation; and so are we children not of the day but of the night: a dark night; and we stumble on until, if grace prevent not, we stumble into eternal ruin. But if God, who "commanded the light to shine out of darkness," shine into our hearts, then we see and feel the desperate wickedness of our hearts, and become a terror to ourselves, and begin to be drawn by and to love the light of the bright and morning Star. "I," saith the Saviour, "if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." And when he appears in his perfection, then the true light begins to shine, the gross darkness begins to pass away, and we begin to look forth as the morning, and shall ere long become as "a morning without clouds!" And so by Jesus, Christ, the cloud of sin is passed away, to return no more for ever; "Yea, saith the Lord, I have *blotted out* as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins."

But not only is there the cloud of sin, but also the cloud of *Sinai*, where God is inaccessible. Here "clouds and tempests are round about him!"

No prayer, no sigh, no cry, can penetrate this cloud: all creature cries are swallowed up by the thunders of Sinai's cloud—Depart, sinner, depart! get you hence, guilty wretch! forbear to tread this holy ground! get you hence, for where God is you cannot come! Here can be no faith, at Sinai, for the "law is not of faith, but of works,"—do, and live. But thou hast sinned, and art already cursed—for "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The cloud is dark; the convinced sinner feels it to be a morning *with* clouds. Here is the cloud of sin, and the cloud of Sinai; when these sights of woe are discovered, Alas, such an one will say, I have been sleeping the sleep of death all my lifetime; I knew not that I was under clouds so dark; I have, alas, been putting darkness for light; I knew not that so fearful a tempest hung over my guilty head; I knew not where I was going to,—but "whereas I was blind, now I see." Ah, yes, I see Jesus the end of sin; I see Jesus the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief;" "Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy upon me;" "Lord, save me!" "Oh, send out thy light and thy truth," let them lead *me*; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, then will I go unto the *altar* of God, and God shall be my exceeding joy, and I shall be as "a morning without clouds."

But there is the cloud not only of sin, and of Sinai, but also of *tribulation*. The clouds of tribulation will more or less darken the path of every one whose face is truly set Zionward: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous:" soul trouble, family trouble, church trouble, worldly trouble, bodily trouble, and troubles of every shape and form, and which we can no more hinder than we can hinder the clouds from hiding the sun from us—in spite of all we can do or say, these clouds will hang at times over our path; the Lord alone can order them off. But then in Christ Jesus is no darkness at all; in him we have "a morning without clouds." And these clouds which darken our path give occasion for the Lord to shew his loving-kindness, his mercy, and his faithfulness; hence, how often have we had occasion to bear testimony with the poet that

"When trouble like a gloomy cloud
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my soul has always stood,
His loving-kindness O how good!"

But there is also the cloud of *death*. And who does not fear as he enters this cloud? It casts its shadow over everything; and this King of Terrors is, indeed, often a terror to kings. Yet it is a cloud that all must enter; but unto some it will be everlasting darkness; but to those who love the Gospel light, unto such the cloud of death will be but a passing shadow,—

merely "the valley of the shadow of death;" and even here also, Jesus having swallowed up death, the victory will be unto such "a morning without clouds."

There are *three* mornings *with* clouds: the fall of man; in this morning we have the clouds of sin, and wrath, and tribulation, and death. And the morning of the Saviour's life, was a morning with clouds; sin hung over him and upon him, Sinai's cloud of wrath hung over him, tribulation's moving cloud encompassed him, and the cloud of death awaited him. And then there is the cloudy morning of regeneration; it then becomes a cloudy morning with the soul—the darkness for the first time is felt; a darkness and great horror fell upon Abraham; the clouds are seen, the tempest is dreaded, the thunders of divine threatenings are heard, forebodings beset the conscience,—the soul is just beginning to live, just beginning to see out of obscurity; it is a morning with clouds; yea

"It's midnight with my soul till he,
Bright Morning Star, bids darkness flee."

Thus, then, the fall of man, the morning of the Saviour's life, and the morning of regeneration, are all cloudy mornings, only all in very different respects. The morning of Adam was cloudy by sin; the morning of the Saviour's life was cloudy by substitution—that is, "He took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh;" the morning of regeneration is cloudy by light that makes manifest the clouds of darkness. But if we come to the morning of Christ's resurrection, then all is light! the clouds are all gone! no more sin, no more curse, no more sorrow, no more death! It is now not sin, but salvation; not suffering, but rejoicing; not tribulation, but consolation; not death, but life. And so in his resurrection, he is "a morning without clouds." Nor is this cloudless morning to be followed by a cloudy day, for "The Lord shall be unto thee thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." After thus shewing what the morning is *with* clouds, I will now shew—

II. WHAT THE MORNING IS WITHOUT CLOUDS. The morning without clouds is the *morning of Christ's resurrection*. He dieth no more. "Death hath no more dominion over him." Now it is that "the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;" the scene is entirely changed: the promises now appear like beauteous and fragrant flowers; songs of praise rise, the silence is broken; Jesus is as the fig-tree, putting forth fruit all the year round; he is the vine that beareth fruit; he hath established a new name, or new names; the church is called now only by her new covenant names, fair one, dove, undefiled, with voice sweet, and countenance comely; and let us see how David realizes for himself, and to himself, this cloudless morning, for David's house, after the flesh, was anything but cloudless, for what good man ever had more or darker clouds in his domestic skies than had the sweet Psalmist of Israel; his life, and house, and royalty, and glory—were all sadly beclouded; but he knew and loved a faithful and covenant-

keeping God; of his God he could say, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever."

And now let us carefully trace out *how* the Lord was unto him a morning without clouds. It was by a covenant. "He hath made with me a covenant;" this means a testamentary will. God did not leave David out of the will, and David knew it was a sworn will, that Christ was the substance, and life, justice, and mercy, and certainty of that will; "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec." And this will or covenant was the way of David's reconciliation to God; the way of his peace with God, for it was a covenant of peace, and this covenant is everlasting; everlasting love, everlasting life, the eternity of Him who is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Here then is firm and clear standing: here the believer is in a country where nothing can be laid to his charge; nor is he here as a run-away debtor, or a run-away criminal; so that no avenger of blood will be sent after him, no extradition law can reach him; nor any charge, accusation, or indictment be brought against him—his debts are honourably paid, his faults atoned for, the law magnified, and he justified. And here he is safe, because this is Immanuel's land; "And in his days shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." This covenant wherein the Saviour comes unto us as "a morning without clouds:" this covenant is an order of things above everything else, and it is impossible for sin to enter into it, as it did the old covenant; this new covenant is a covenant of eternal, sinless consecration to God; it is that covenant wherein the church is and ever must be "all fair," and without spot, and wherein stands the challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth." Very few professors have any will to come into this covenant, but make light of it, and go *their way*, not God's way, but they go *their way*; but the Lord will teach his own to go *his way*, saying, "Hearken diligently, incline your ear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

But this covenant is an *everlasting* covenant. This made David say, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." It made him say also, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and amen." Here, then, is the substitute for that which passeth away. See how Peter in his first chapter reads this out unto us, in elective consecration, in regeneration, combined with resurrection, and in pure inheritance, possession thereof,—“Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” And so he goes on to shew the unity of the mercy of God with the final possession and enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. So that unto David was revealed the immutability of the counsel of God; and here he found a cloudless morning, a long, an everlasting day—and there is no night there.

But this covenant is ordered in all things and sure; there is nothing vague—nothing at random; as the ark, the tabernacle, and temple, were not made at random, so this covenant in all its arrangements, is such as shall meet, and establish, and make good all its provisions and designs. Jesus Christ is the executor of this will, “And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.” Truly, then, well may the Lord be the confidence of all his people, even to the ends of the earth, and they that be afar off upon the sea. What confidence can we have in men who have no *order* in the management of their affairs? The Lord, then, guides his affairs with discretion; he guides his people by the *skilfulness* of his hands, and feeds them according to the integrity of his heart; but this covenant is ordered not merely in some things, but in all things; not one of its infinite items overlooked; it is ordered in *all* things, and consequently, *sure*; everything in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, must bow before it. Here lies the secret of all things working together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose. If it minister so much to our comfort in natural things, to have our life, and health, and sustenance in safety,—what shall we say to the delightful truth of having eternal life, and health, and sustenance in safety; and to this end this new covenant was entrusted; not to angels—nor to men, but only to Immanuel.

“ He trusts in our Redeemer’s hands,
His glory and his grace.”

And this covenant is all our salvation; it is included in this covenant; here none are reckoned otherwise than sons, saints, and kings, and priests to God; no fault of theirs in the fall of Adam, or personally before or after calling can weaken one clause of this covenant; this covenant is *all* salvation without any mixture, or possibility of condemnation; mercy unassociated with wrath—yea, one of its very provisions is that “I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee:” there is, as we stand in this covenant, nothing to rebuke us for: the Surety has borne and taken away *all* the blame; finding fault with the people of the old covenant; but here, with the people of this new covenant, he finds no fault. They are without fault before the throne of God: the first covenant had mediators and priests, but they were all compassed with infirmities; so that there was no substitutional perfection by which the people could be presented to God. And so the law of the Levitical dispensation made men high priests who had infirmities; but “the word of the oath of the new covenant maketh the Son of God, who had no infirmity, a Priest for ever, after the power of an endless life.” Now he had no fault, or sin, or infirmity; but he took away by the sacrifice of himself the faults, and sins, and infirmities of those who were faulty, who were sinners, and compassed with infirmity—while he remains in the purity and perfection of his person and work as their representative, and so they are complete in him. Here, then, no iniquity can be beheld, for there is none here—no perverseness can be seen, for there is none; here the Lord his God is with Jacob. Not only is there no sin here in this covenant, but

there is even no remembrance of sin; it is *all* salvation; and here "the light of the moon (the gospel) is as the light of the sun," the moon of the gospel here shining forth in all the perfection of Christ Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness; the light of that seven days which witnessed the finishing of the heavens and of the earth, and all the host of them: here the breach which sin had made, is made up—here the stroke of its wound is healed—here rebuke is taken away: there is nothing to rebuke for, and so they are presented without rebuke and blame. And so is the Saviour as a morning without clouds; and so is the church shining forth as the the sun in the kingdom of God.

But not only is this covenant all salvation, but it answers all desires. No Christian desires anything more, yet nothing less can save, supply, and satisfy; while neither faith, nor hope, nor love, nor prayer, nor godly fear, nor good works are the rule of measurement here as to what our real standing in the covenant is, these graces of the Spirit distinguish the real Christian from others. But then all these will rise and fall, wax and wane, ebb and flow; so that faith is little, hope low, love cold, prayer weak and feeble, godly fear hardly felt,—yet our standing in the covenant is just the same. Noah fell in with the plan of the ark, and according to the nature of every one's faith, so be it unto him. But Noah was not more or less saved just as his faith and feeling might rise and fall; he was saved by the ark. So the Israelite who had just faith enough to fall in with the paschal lamb and its order—escaped not in proportion to the comfortable-ness or uncomfortable-ness of his mind, but by the paschal lamb. How firm, then, was the position of David, when he said, "this is all my salvation, and all my desire." It was all his desire *comparatively*; he desired nothing else so much as he did this covenant salvation; it was all his desire essentially; nothing else was essential to salvation, it was *all* his salvation, and all his desire. It would become all his desire not merely comparatively and essentially, but *absolutely*, for when all other desires shall fail, this covenant fills up all the vacant spaces of the soul; nothing else through long eternity will be needed; this covenant will bring fulness of joy, and pleasures for ever more; and though this covenant was not yet planted, it must be planted under the law—must, though a tender plant at the first, and under skies the most inclement, yet it must flourish and grow up unto perfection, which by Jesus Christ it did, and that, saith David, though he make it not to grow as yet, but will in due time be planted, and grow, and be a goodly cedar; and fowl of every wing shall dwell in the branches thereof. David knew he had to do with a true God, and knew all must come to pass, and not only so—not only though it be not yet planted, and not yet made to grow, but though it be not made to flourish in my soul, so as to give abundant enjoyment of it, yet though it doth not give delight—it will do: I will hold it fast, for nothing else can save me, it is all my salvation; for the vision is for an appointed time; it will not deceive me; no, for blessed are all they that wait for him: no, if he meant to destroy me he would not have revealed

this covenant to me ; I will not attempt to burn the house down because I cannot just now get in, for I would rather be at the threshold of his house, than to dwell in the tents of them who are enemies to this house ; I will not for thirty pieces, nor for any sum (grace keeping me) sell the estate merely because I cannot take possession of it before the time appointed of the Father, "for here is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Here, then, is a morning without clouds. From the womb of this heavenly morning we have the dew of eternal youth. Truly then, Jesus is both the morning, and the hind of the morning ; "a hind let loose, giving goodly words ;" the morning cloudless ; the day endless ; the climate genial ; the wealth infinite ; the glory boundless. He who has no heart to believe and to love, to seek, to serve, and to glorify such a God as this—is in darkness even until now ; but he who enlightens one can enlighten another ; and he who saves one can save another ; yet there is room ; "Him that cometh unto me," saith the Surety of this covenant, "I will in no wise cast out." This new covenant salvation is the gospel which is to be preached to every creature ; there is salvation in none other.

The death and resurrection of the Saviour, are the law and the testimony, by which we are to be tried ; and if we speak not according to this word, then there is (as the margin reads it) "no morning-in us ;" the eternity of the perfection of his atonement, and the certainty of the eternal life of all for whom he died—will bring us out of obscurity into that light which is above the brightness of the sun. All we are that is pleasing in the sight of God, must be by Christ Jesus ; his pastoral responsibility—his priesthood—his royalty—his Sonship, his victories—all shine forth with cloudless splendour : the morning star ; the dawn of day ; the rising sun, pre as mere glow-worms to him, and if by a figure of speech darkness mean everything that is evil, and light mean everything that is good, then by Christ Jesus how completely is the darkness passed away, and the purest and divinest light made for ever to shine. May it be our happy lot to walk in the light, even as he is in the light ; and so shall we prove that we are children *not* of the night, but of the day ; and so neither death nor judgment, shall overtake us as a thief ; but we shall as really rise and reign in endless day.