

THE THREE HOURS' DARKNESS NO. 3471

A SERMON
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*“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.”
Matthew 27:45*

THIS darkness was not occasioned by any of the natural causes which generally produce darkness. It was in the middle of the day, precisely at noon, that the darkness came. It could not have been caused by an eclipse, for, it being the time of the Passover, we know that the moon was just then at its full, at which period no such thing as an eclipse of the sun could possibly occur.

It could not, then, have been produced from that cause. And from the way in which Luke describes it, it does not seem to have been occasioned by the sun being eclipsed by any other body, for if you look to his narrative you will find he seems to say that the darkness came first, and that afterwards the sun became dark.

Whether this was through some dense vapor coming over the face of the earth, an intensification of some of these fogs to which we are so accustomed, or whether it was through a miraculous action upon the atmosphere, so that while the sun shone its light was no longer able to reach the eye, we cannot tell, but in some way or other darkness prevailed over all the land from twelve o'clock till three in the afternoon.

We suppose that this darkness came on suddenly and if so, it must have been most striking. Just in the midst of their ribald mirth, while they were staring at the naked body of their victim, and insulting Him with their jests and jeers, wagging their heads, and thrusting out their tongues—just at that very moment total darkness came on. We suppose it to have been total, or, at any rate, such a gloom as to be a “darkness” which “was over all the land.”

We suppose, too, that just as suddenly this darkness was withdrawn. As soon as the Savior expired, just at the moment when He gave His last triumphant shout, “It is finished,” the sun gleamed forth again and the earth laughed once more in the sunlight—for the great trial of Christ, the great struggle for man’s salvation, was then all over. Such a phenomenon must have been most striking. The sudden darkening and the sudden lighting up of the world must have been a thing to be remembered and to be talked of by all who saw it.

As for ourselves at this time, we have not so much to do with the physical causes or with the appearance itself, as with the spiritual meaning of this darkness. There is light in this darkness, if not to the natural, yet to the spiritual eye, if we have grace to discern it.

There is something to be learned, *even from the darkness*—something to be learned *from the light*, and something to be learned from *both the darkness and the light* together.

In the first place, there is, we believe—

I. SOMETHING TO BE LEARNED IN THIS REMARKABLE DARKNESS, which covered all the land during the sharpest and severest part of our Savior’s agony.

We learn, first, *the sympathy of creation with her Lord*. There is a singular sympathy in creation between God’s vicegerent on earth, namely, man, and the world. When man was in his integrity, then the earth was fruitful, but when man fell, the curse fell upon the ground as well as upon man. “Cursed be the ground for thy sake.” Then the thorn and the thistle sprang up, being sent by God as a token of His displeasure with man.

We believe, brethren, that “the creature was made subject to vanity not willingly,” and that in due time, when sin has been cleansed away, this earth of ours will be redeemed from the curse. We are looking for the happy and halcyon time when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, and then this poor darkened planet shall be washed from her night garments of mist, and shall shine out like her sister-stars, the unfallen worlds, praising and magnifying the God who created her.

Now if there be this sympathy, as we are sure there is, between the earth and man, much more is there a sympathy between the earth and God—and more still between the earth and that Man who was God as well as man. Observe that when He was born, midnight turned to midday, and when He died mid-day turned to midnight. When He was born, heaven was lit up with splendor, and from angelic choirs the Bethlehem-song was heard, while men also rejoiced, because unto them a child was born, unto them a Son was given. But when he died, heaven put out her brightest light. “Thou sun, of this great world, both eye and soul,” you did—

“Acknowledge Him your greater,”

and perceiving it in midday—midnight, with your face all wrapped as in a mantle for very shame, you did lament Him whom men scoffed and mocked at, for you were the chief mourner at the death of the King of Kings.

The earth, then, thus showed her sympathy with the Lord Jesus Christ by her darkness. Remember, too, that she also trembled through her ribs of stone, for there was an earthquake, and the veil of the temple was rent in twain—and even death acknowledged its defeat, for many of the saints that slept, arose. There is a wondrous sympathy, then, between the world and He who made and redeemed the world—and this was manifested by the darkening of the world at the time of His death.

But secondly, there was a great deal more in the darkness than this. *It was surely a rebuke and a check to the insulting cruelty of man.* What louder rebuke, though without a sound. What stronger check, though without a voice, could have been offered to that assembled throng? The Roman in his pride, the Jew in his bigotry, and the Gentile in his hatred of all that was sacred, were all there—and all did their utmost to pour contempt on Christ, and just in the midst of it they were like the men who sought after a light in Sodom, and as if they were all smitten with blindness—they could not find their way.

It was all dark round about Him. Now they could no longer scoff at Him. They dared not now say, “Let him come down from the cross!” I suppose that during those three hours there must have been an intense silence, or if men ventured to use their lips, they whispered to one another, “What is this that has come upon us? Is this the judgment, and is that man, after all, the King of the Jews, and is this darkness, this darkness which may be felt, the taking away of the light of mercy from our eyes that we may perish in everlasting darkness?”

I think I can hear them muttering thus, as some of them found their way to their homes, stumbling and falling to the ground, and others of them coming together for the sake of company to keep up their courage—but all of them sitting astonished in the thick darkness and wondering what it could mean—when a tremor went through all the earth and the veil of the temple was rent, and even the heathen centurion, astonished by all these surprising concomitants of the death of this crucified man, said, “Surely this must be the Son of God!” It was an amazing rebuke, then, to the wickedness of man which then came to its climax round about the cross.

Was it not also, in the third place, *the furnishing of our Savior with a retiring room*, not that He might get a shelter, but that He might now be able to do His great work—bear the full weight of our sins and endure the extremities of the divine wrath? I must not say it, but I do think it would have been impossible for human eyes to have looked upon the Savior when He was in the full vortex of the storm of wrath which fell upon Him—and that God, even in mercy to man, shut to the door that man’s eye might not see the Savior in that fearful extremity of misery.

It was not meet, when He trod the winepress, that He should be gazed upon. He must tread the winepress alone in all the fullest meaning of that word, not even with an eye to gaze upon Him. It must be in the thick darkness that He must press those grapes of wrath and stain His garments with His blood.

Oh! brethren, you can have no thought—it is impossible you should—of the depth of the Savior's sufferings. The Greek liturgy, when it speaks of Christ's sufferings as "thine *unknown* sufferings," has just hit the mark. They were unknown—unknown to us and unknown, also, perhaps, to lost souls in hell, so dire and so extreme were they. He was shut up in the darkness that He might there alone bear the whole of it.

And was not this darkness, too, *intended to be to us a sort of emblem of His state*? It is as much as if God had said to us, "You want to know what Christ had to suffer? You cannot know, but that black darkness is the emblem of it." The darkness seems to say to us, "Oh! mortal, you cannot understand me—those poor optics of yours are meant for another element, namely, for light—you lose yourself in me. You cannot find a pathway in the thick black darkness."

So Christ on the cross seems to say to us, "My people, you can follow Me to some extent. In some of My paths you must follow Me, but here, as your atoning surety and as the vicarious sacrifice for your sins—here you cannot follow Me. This is not your element—you will lose yourselves here. You cannot comprehend it. It is only I, only I who have endured the wrath of God, and know what it means, who can travel on this road."

Christian, when you are most oppressed in soul with fellowship with Christ, and when you feel that when asked the question, with James and John, "Are ye able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?" you could answer, "Yes, we are able"—mind, there is a point where you are not able—there is something in that cup which you cannot drink. There is a depth in that baptism which you cannot know.

Thank God that you cannot know it. Bless the Master that those paths of horrid gloom, where hell's blackest nights thicken into the most intense infinitude of darkness, you can never know. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was not a cry for you, but for the Savior. To be cast out of God's presence, and to bear the weight of sin, is not for you, but for Christ. He has done it for you, and so the darkness becomes a fit emblem to you because you cannot understand it, neither can you fathom nor understand the depths of the Savior's sufferings.

Once more. Does not the darkness, inasmuch as it is an emblem of Christ's sufferings, *also set forth to us our own condition*? I suppose the Savior was, by force of His suretyship, constrained to take the very place which the sinner should have occupied. The plan of salvation is just this, that Christ shall take the sinner's place and suffer in the sinner's room and stead, what the sinner ought to have suffered.

The very pith and marrow of the Gospel lies in that word—"substitution." Christ was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We take Christ's place because Christ took our place. He stood in the room, place, and stead of lost sinners. Well now, the place of a lost sinner is the place of darkness. Outer darkness will be his eternal place, and darkness is his present state—his natural condition—as the apostle said, "We were sometimes darkness."

So the Savior is made to be in darkness, and as man would have had to abide forever in darkness, misery, despair, and hopelessness, so the Savior is for three hours denied the light of the sun. He is denied all comfort, denied all mercies—He is left without a glimpse of His Father, or a ray from the light of the sun, because He then stood in the room, place, and stead of His people.

Ah! Christian, ought not this to make you hate sin, to think that sin thus put you in the dark, and would have kept you there, and continued you in the blackness of darkness forever? Ought it not, too, to make you hate it when you remember that it put your Lord in the dark, and made Him hang bleeding from His wound, without a light to cheer Him or a glimpse to comfort Him? If, Christian, you do not hate sin when you think of this darkness, surely you must be in the dark still! We gather, then, these few lessons from the darkness, though we are persuaded that there are many more in it.

But now we come to—

II. GATHER SOME LESSONS FROM THE LIGHT.

It is fair to say that the darkness continued till just about the time when the Savior died, and that the light came as the Savior expired. The light broke upon Him a few minutes, or perhaps less, after He had cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani," and after He had received the vinegar, and with a loud voice had given up the ghost. It is fair to say, then, that the darkness lasted till the Savior died. *A dying Savior lights up the world.* His expiring groan bids the sun come back. He raises His triumphant shout and "It is finished" kindles, like a torch, the lamp of day once more, and earth is glad, for salvation's work is accomplished.

What learn we, then, from the fact of the light returning as soon as the Savior died? Why, in the first place, we learn *that the darkness was gone forever from Himself—that the wrath of God no longer continues to bind or threaten Him.* Sometimes, when speaking of our justification, we have compared ourselves to a woman in debt. Now this woman, though immersed in debt and unable to pay, becomes the object of affection and is married.

No sooner is the nuptial knot tied and the ring placed upon her fingers than she is free from debt. No sheriff's officer can arrest her—whatever her debts may have been, she is not in debt any longer, because her debts are all transferred to her husband and are no longer hers. Now this may be some sort of comfort to her, but if she is of a loving and tender heart, she still feels that she is in bondage because he whom she loves is in bondage.

"My husband" says she, "has the debt and I feel that as heavily as if I had it myself." But as soon as ever he has discharged the debt, she then has this as a double ground for confidence and joy—she is free twice—free, first, by the debt being laid on her husband. Free, secondly, by his discharging the debt. Now see you here, Christian—you are clear, for your sin was laid on Christ. It is a law that a thing cannot be in two places at one time—if my sin was on Christ, it cannot be on me. If it was laid on Him, according to God's Word, "He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"—then it cannot lie on me and on Christ, too, and therefore, am I clear.

But supposing it laid on Him still? There would still be cause for grief and sorrow of heart. But it does not, for Christ has discharged the debt and in token thereof, the black darkness which brooded over Him during the three hours of His passion suddenly turned to the bright light of day. Now He no more stands before God as an outcast, but He Himself is justified and has risen again for our justification.

This clearing of the sky was, as it were, a declaration on the part of heaven that the debt which Christ had taken had been paid. The Surety had smarted and now those for whom He had been surety might go free. In this returning light, my cheerful eyes see the fact that Christ is free as well as those for whom He stood.

Again, we see something else, namely, *that the curse has also gone from the world.* The darkness was on Christ and the darkness was also over all the land. Now when the darkness went away from Christ, it also went away from the land. I have already said that there is a sympathy between Nature and its Maker. When the curse fell upon Him, "without whom was not anything made that was made," it was on Nature, too.

Now Christ has put that away. I do not know whether you ever indulge in the sweet thought, but one likes sometimes to revel in it. "The creature itself also shall be delivered from bondage." There is a day coming in which this world shall not bring forth thorns and thistles, in which it shall not be a wilderness—a howling and a barren place—but it shall be literally true that, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

And though the prophecy bears a spiritual meaning, yet it shall also bear a literal one, that "instead of the thorn shall come up the myrtle, and instead of the briar shall come up the fir-tree and the box-tree together," for the Lord God, who cleared His Son from the curse, will also clear the world from the curse, and revoke the sentence, "Cursed shall the ground be for thy sake," for earth shall yet again be blessed.

Is it not written that Christ was revealed to destroy the works of the devil? And as it was one of the works of the devil to pollute and defile this world, so shall it be one of the works of Christ to cleanse and purify it. This world has been the theater of sin, but it will be cleansed and purged, and made the theater of holiness.

“I looked,” says John, “and I saw a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Perhaps there will be purifying fires, according to the word of Peter, “The elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up,” and then afterwards, once again refitted, freed from the last relic of man’s evil doings, there shall be heard the shout, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell among them! Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” May such happy days soon come! We expect them because the darkness was rolled away when Jesus died. This, however, is but speculative. We will, therefore, turn to something that is more solid.

It seems to me that the moving off of this darkness when the Master died *was a picture of the lifting of the veil of despair from off the face of the whole human family*. Brethren and sisters, did you ever feel yourselves forced to read a description of heathenism in Hindustan? I remember to have listened with extreme pain to a description given of the idolatries of India by one who knew them thoroughly and had seen them. One could hardly bear a recapitulation of the sacred rites of the Hindus without feeling that one’s mind was polluted, quite polluted by knowing what their religion was. It was so debasing and degrading to the mind that one felt it was a dangerous experiment even to know about it.

Now those Christian people who have lived in such a country as Hindustan, and have marked how the people are set upon their idols, though, even according to their own description of them, those idols are monsters of filth—those who have lived there, I say, might well say, “It is of no use. No light will ever come here.”

But the Christian is forbidden to say this, for Christ has taken the darkness from off all the face of the land. So, as far as this is concerned, we must never despair of any cases now. Christ’s death took the veil away and there is no reason now why India’s teeming millions should not stretch out their hands to Christ.

Cast your eye to China. A million souls a month die unsaved in China, never having heard of *Christ!* It is an awful thought, and one that might break one’s heart if one indulged in it. Now what is there to be done for such teeming multitudes? The whole world still lies in the wicked one, what with Mohammedanism, idolatry, Romanism, and all the other forms of self-worship. What is to be done?

Christian, do what you can and then leave it with Christ. He took away the darkness by His dying, and rest assured that the proclamation of His death will take away all the darkness of despair from the face of the world. Now the next time you look upon some person who has been a very gross sinner, if there is a temptation in your mind to say, “It is no use trying after him—he must be given up—that man cannot be saved,” check that thought.

Even if the man is a drunkard, or swearer, or thief, or all these things in one, remember that Christ took away the darkness of despair from off all the land and so He has taken away despair even from that soul. You have no right to say that that soul cannot be saved, but your business is to pray for it and labor for it, if haply it may find the light. If this darkness had not all been removed. If there had been but one spot left, I might have said, “There is no hope for me,” but if the dying Christ lights the whole world over, then why, oh! why should I lie down in despair?

Why not say, “Who can tell, perhaps He will have mercy upon me? Who can tell, perhaps even my sin may be forgiven! Who knows, the black darkness may yet be swept away from me and even I may rejoice in the light of His countenance?” Christ, in taking away the darkness, then, removed the despair which was the black Egyptian night that covered the world.

Yet, farther, there was another darkness which covered the earth in Christ’s day, namely, *the darkness of soul-ignorance*. This darkness Christ, by dying, took away. Up till the death of Christ, if

man had desired salvation, he could not have found the way. He was in total darkness. No man could ever by his own scheming have found out the plan of substitution.

Socrates and Plato were two men of masterminds—if any of woman born could have found out the way of salvation, they would have done it—but their discoveries were of very little worth to mankind. It was only when Christ bowed His head in the agonies of death that man knew there was a gate to Paradise. I mean not that the saints did not know it, but they only knew that this was the gate, that it was the dying Savior who was the road to heaven.

It was the fact of Christ coming in human flesh and suffering for man which was the answer to the world's great riddle. The world's riddle was, "How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" Man tried to spell it out, but never could. But when Jesus died, the darkness was taken away, and man then understood the way to God.

Now, beloved friends, the business we have to do is to tell to those who are still in the dark the story of Christ. If you know any people in the world who are ignorant about soul-matters, do not begin to talk to them about the existence of a God. Do not commence with the doctrine of election—begin with the story of a dying Savior—that is the way to teach.

When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland there were many who tried to teach the Greenlanders about God. They thought they were not in a prepared state to know about Christ till, by accident, one of them happened to read the chapter containing the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Oh!" said the Greenlanders, "why did you not tell us this before? This is the one thing we want to know." So it is. It is not merely that there is a God, for Nature teaches that, but that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. This, this is the great lesson, and if you want to take away darkness from the soul, you must teach this.

A great deal is said about the usefulness of education and I suppose that no intelligent person would say a word against that. The more education the better, but it is outrageous to suppose that education, even carried to the highest degree, will necessarily better a man. A man may be all the worse for education unless the spiritual part of his nature is educated.

He may be a profound philosopher and yet he may justify the butchery of innocent men and women. He may be one of the finest art critics in the world, and yet he may back up a monster who could allow men to whip pregnant women and to shoot down poor creatures who were fugitives in cold-blood! The highest education does not keep a man from justifying inhumanity.

A man needs to have his heart right, or everything else will go wrong, let him learn whatever he may. But when a man has the story of Christ in his heart and sees that Jesus died, then soul-ignorance flies away. He sees true light in seeing Christ as the substitute for human guilt. His soul clings to God, understands Him, lays hold upon Him, rejoices in Him—and this is the point where education must begin. It must begin at the cross. Teach men all else you please, but if you leave out the *scientia scientiarum*—the science of sciences, the knowledge of knowledge—you have done but little. You have only helped the man to a greater responsibility and to a direr ruin.

Again, the moving away of the darkness when the Savior died was not merely the taking away of soul-ignorance, but also of *moral guilt*. There was the darkness of sin over the world—a thick darkness covered all mankind, even as it does now. The only place of light in the world is where the cross beams. All other systems have tried, but they have only increased the darkness.

Mohammedanism was for a time a great improvement on anything that went before it, but what is it now? What is its teaching and what is its influence upon man now? It is "evil, only evil, and that continually." But the doctrine that Christ was crucified for man, that God has punished sin in Christ, and that God is ready to forgive the sinner—the doctrine that whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned—this makes men holy.

They hate sin in the light of this. They love God in the light of the cross. They seek after virtue and holiness when they come to know the Savior, but they never come to any perfection until they first know Him. It seems to me, then, that the chief business of every Christian should be the telling out of the death of Christ, for this is the lamp that is wanted.

Oh! dear brethren and sisters, when I think about the mischief that is being done in England by Popery, and by all sorts of darkness, I am inclined to say, "Let us give up preaching anything except the cross of Christ!" It does seem as if we might merge some other matters. We dare not neglect any truth, but it does sometimes seem a strong temptation to forget everything else and keep on teaching, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God," and to make it—

***"All our business here below,
To cry 'Behold the Lamb.'"***

The one thing that England wants is Christ preached and Christ believed in. The great thing that the whole earth wants is the crucified Savior. It would be in vain for Aaron to bring out the smoking incense when men are dying, being bitten of the serpent—the smoke of incense is of no avail then. It would be in vain for Moses to bring down the Ten Commands when men are dying, being bitten—the Ten Commands cannot heal them.

Oh! for the uplifting of the brazen serpent! That is the one thing that Israel's camp wants and that is the one need of London now—Christ on the cross uplifted before the sinner's gaze and the continual cry, "Look, look, look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth!" If any Christian minister here present has been backward in preaching Christ, if he has been for the last few Sundays preaching mere doctrine, preaching only experience, preaching metaphysics, but not preaching Christ, let him repent of the sin and never commit it again.

And if any one of us in our conversation shall have been all this week talking about politics, or matters of taste, and so on, without talking about Christ, let us ask for mercy in this respect. Oh! come back to Jesus that you may kindle your torches. You may kindle your beams of light by your camp fires and hope to remove the darkness in your own poor way, but you will do nothing at all. But if you bring out a dying Savior, He will take away the midday—midnight of the world at once—and light shall come streaming even through the darkness. God grant us to live more to Christ, to think more of Christ, to speak more about Him, and to breathe more of His Spirit.

I would ask brethren and sisters who are present to join with us in earnest prayer that there may be a thorough revival throughout England of the preaching of the doctrine of the cross, and that God would put power into the ministry in order to the conversion of many.

I told you last Sunday that some of us would meet on Tuesday for prayer all day long. We have never had such a day as that before. I have thought since that I shall never see such another day, when some hundred or more of us met together to fast and pray during the day. We continued in prayer from about ten till six o'clock, unwearied, unexhausted. If any soul ever went to the gates of heaven, I did last Tuesday.

I feel now like a reed that is broken, the strength gone out of me through the excessive excitement, the sort of sacred delirium, of wrestling with God in prayer, in company with the brethren present, for the conversion of sinners. There were times during last Tuesday when we could not any of us pray, and strong men as we were, we were but just able to cry aloud as if our hearts would break, because we could not let the Lord go till He had looked down on His poor church and returned again in mercy to visit His ministers.

We feel as if we want a revival of religion now—not such revivals as there were a few years ago—some of us think but little of them. We believe there were many ingathered, but where are many of them now? Scattered, to a very great extent, to the winds of heaven. We need the true revival work of the

Holy Ghost, without fanaticism and without excitement, but the genuine stirring of the soul of the people, the turning of them unto God as on the Day of Pentecost.

And we shall have it, brethren. We shall have it, for we have sought it in believing prayer. We shall have it, for it must come through every Christian resolving that the cross of Christ, the blood of the Savior, shall be the theme of his life and the object of his desires—telling of it wherever he goes and so taking the darkness from off the face of the land.

And now, putting the two together—

III. THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT ARE EMBLEMATIC OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Christ had hours of darkness and then there came the light. The church has her hours of darkness too. She has struggled by her martyrs. She has even died in the persons of her confessors. Then comes her light. She has her “Dark Ages” and she has her “Reformation.” She must struggle on through the darkness, expecting the light to come. Perhaps the light will come in a way in which we have not expected it. Perhaps the Master Himself will come before long—the Light of Lights, the Beginner of Days. May it be so! Meanwhile, we must, like Him, struggle through the darkness.

Then, again, *is not this the experience of every Christian?* It is darkness first, and light afterwards—ay, hours of darkness, weeks of darkness, months of darkness—with some of us years of darkness. Well, feel your nothingness to be a preparation for laying hold of Christ. To be broken is the way to be bound up. To be killed is the way to be made alive, and we must have this darkness to a greater or less extent.

Child of God, if you happen to be in the dark just now, do not think that some strange thing has happened to you. Your Master went through the darkness. He fought upon the cross and triumphed, but remember that the Savior’s triumph was on the cross, and yours will be there too. You will suffer, and your triumph will be in suffering. You must expect to earn the victory in death. It shall be when you bow the head and give up the ghost that you shall have your, “It is finished!” on your lips, and enter into glory won. Expect the darkness if you have it, wonder not at it, but cheerfully wait until the light shall come.

Now, are there some hearts in the Tabernacle tonight who want to find the light? I am glad to see so many of you come on week-nights to listen to the simple preaching of the Gospel. Surely you must have some desires after Christ! Are there none of you in the dark who are unhappy and miserable? Do you want to get at the light? You will never get it by looking into your own hearts. You will never find it by any outward performance, by any outward rites and ceremonies. The only light for a poor miserable sinner is that which Christ struck on the cross. You must look to Him, trust Him, and then you shall have the light, and shall turn your misery into joy, take away your sackcloth, and gird you with scarlet, and make you dance for joy of heart.

Oh! seeking sinner, look nowhere but to the cross! Let not Satan deceive you by saying that you must feel so and so, or do so and so. Your feelings and doings are nothing. Only what Christ felt and what Christ did can alone save you. Look out of self to the Savior. Shake your hands clear of everything of your own and look to what Christ did when He hung upon the cross, and when in the loom of His death He wrought with the shuttle of His pangs and His sorrows a garment to cover poor naked souls withal.

Your light, poor weary sinner, is not the candle of Popish error, nor yet the candle of your own dark heart, but the sunlight of the cross. Look there, and you shall be of good comfort, for to him who looks to Christ, light shall arise out of the darkness.

May the Master give every one of you a blessing through this plain but truly earnest attempt to lead you to Himself and so secure your eternal salvation. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 55:1-4

It is the language of infinite mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, and poor, and miserable through sin—but God, instead of driving us from His presence, comes loaded with mercy—and thus He speaks to us.

Verse 1. *Ho, every one who thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

See the freeness of divine love! See how God who knows the wants of souls, provides all things needful for them—water—the water of life. And as if that were not enough, the wine of joy, the milk of satisfaction—and He offers these freely. But mark you, there is no gain for Him—the gain is for us, for He says, “He that hath no money, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” All that you want, dear friend, God is ready to give you. Do you want these good things Then come and welcome. It is God who bids you come.

2. *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*

Why do you seek to get comfort for your souls where you will never get it? Why do you try to content your immortal nature upon things that will die? There is nothing here below that can satisfy you. Why spend your money, then, for these things, and your labor for nothing?

2. *Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

God has real food for your soul—something that will make you truly happy. He will satisfy you, not with the name of goodness, but with the reality of it, if you will but come and have it. You shall have fullness—you shall have delight—if you are but willing to come and receive it.

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live;*

Then who would not hear—who would not give the attention—if by that attention immortal life may be received?

3. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

Will God enter into covenant with sinful men—with thirsty men—with hungry men—with needy men—with guilty men? Ah! that He will. “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

4. *Behold, I have given him*

That is the Son of David—Jesus the *Christ*—“I have given him.”

4. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

If you want anyone to tell you what God is, Jesus Christ is the witness to the character of God. Do you want a leader to lead you back to peace and happiness—a commander by whose power you may be able to fight Satan and all the powers of darkness that hold you in bondage? God has all in Jesus Christ that I can need for time and eternity, and this can all be mine for the asking and receiving. Shall we not ask and receive?

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.