

LIGHT, NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL

NO. 660

A SERMON
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AT CORNWALL ROAD CHAPEL, BAYSWATER.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”
Genesis 1:1-5.

THIS is, no doubt, a literal and accurate account of God’s first day’s work in the creation of the world, but the first creation is not the subject of this morning’s discourse, *we would rather direct your minds to the second creation of God.* Every man who is saved by grace is a new creation. The great work which Jesus Christ is accomplishing in the world, by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is the making of all things new. We believe the old creation to have been typical of the new, and we shall so use it. May we all be taught of the Lord while so doing.

Observe, dear friends, the state of the world. It is said to have been *“without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”* Such is the state of every human heart till God the Holy Spirit visits it. So far as spiritual things are concerned, the human heart is in a state of chaos and disorder. There is no thought of faith, of love, of hope, of obedience. It is a spiritually confused mass of dead sinfulness, in which everything is misplaced. It is void or utterly empty. Search the human heart through, and it is true of it as Paul says, *“In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.”*

Over the whole, as in the old creation a thick darkness reigns, comparable to that of Egypt, a darkness that might be felt. This is true of all men—not of the ignorant in the lowest haunts of London, whose depraved parentage and education have prevented them from knowing divine things—but this is true of those who are trained up under the sound of the Gospel, and whose morals are good and exemplary, they are still darkness, naturally, until God the Holy Spirit comes to renew them.

In the whole world, whether it be among kings, statesmen, or divines, there is not one who has so much as a spark of spiritual light, unless he has received it from above, and he can only have received it from above through Him who is *“the true light which lights every man who comes into the world,”* who is enlightened at all. Dark, dark, dark is the whole of humanity. It dwells in the black darkness of sin, and must perish there unless the same divine power which said, *“Let there be light,”* of old, shall bestow spiritual light.

You observe that the first divine action in connection with the formation and shaping of the world, was this, *“The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”* The secret work of the Holy Spirit begins in the human heart—we cannot always say precisely when or how. *“The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and whither it goes: so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”* In the hearts of God’s chosen ones, this Spirit works mysteriously and silently, but most efficaciously. The expression translated, *“moved upon,”* conveys in the original the idea of a bird brooding over its nest. The Holy Ghost mysteriously quickens the dead heart, excites emotions, longings, desires.

It may be some of you are feeling His operations this morning. You have not yet received the divine light, but there are workings of the divine energy in your spirit. You are not easy in your present lost

estate. You are discontented to be what you now are. You are desirous to enter into God's marvelous light. For this I thank God, and take it as a hopeful symptom, and I pray that He may, this morning, if it be His gracious will, lead you farther, and make you feel today that early operation of divine grace, by which light is given to the darkened soul.

I. In considering the text, we shall notice FIRST THE DIVINE DECREE. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

The Lord Himself needs no light to enable Him to discern His creatures,

*"Darkness and light in this agree,
Great God they're both alike to Thee."*

He looked upon the darkness, and resolved that He would transform its shapeless chaos into a fair and lovely world.

We shall observe that the work of grace by which light enters the soul is a *needful* work. God's plan for the sustaining of vegetable and animal life, rendered light necessary. Light is essential to life. There are few operations which can be carried on in the world at all, without some degree of light, and certainly no heart can be saved without spiritual light. It is light, my brethren, which first shows us our lost estate, for we know nothing of it naturally.

We think that we are righteous, that all is well with our souls. But when the divine light comes in, we discover that we are fallen in Adam, and are terribly undone. Naturally we think that we are no worse than others, that if we have offended, our offenses are very minor, and almost deserve to be pardoned. But when light enters, the exceeding sinfulness of sin is discovered. This causes pain and anguish of heart. But that pain and anguish are necessary in order to bring us to lay hold on Jesus Christ, whom the light next displays to us.

No man ever knows Christ till the light of God shines on the cross. You may look at a picture of the bleeding Jesus, you may read the story of His wounds, but you have not seen Christ, so as to be saved by His death, unless the light of His Spirit has revealed Him to you as the great substitute for sinners, the surety of the new covenant, and suffering in your room, and place, and stead. You know Him not, unless the mysterious light has led you to read these words as your own, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Neither our state, nor our sin, nor our Savior can we see without light.

You who worship God, but are not converted, are like the men of Athens who worshipped an unknown God. You do not feel Him to be a real existence. You do not come near to Him. You have no true love to Him. You cannot cry, "Abba Father," you are not made partakers of the divine nature, and you can never be brought near to God unless heavenly light shall manifest God to you as your God who in eternal purposes chose you to be His, and by the gift of His dear Son has bought you to be His own forever.

The great truths of heaven, hell, and immortality, are not clearly perceived till the light shines on them. You receive them as matter of settled doctrine, because you have been taught them from your youth up, but He who brings life and immortality to light is Christ Jesus, and without the light, life and immortality are mere names, not real things to you.

Beloved, if we could save men by the application of drops of water, or by giving them bread and wine to eat and drink—if we were so foolish as to believe that souls could be affected by physical substances, and that the hearts of men could be renewed by external observances, there would be no need of light, but ours is a religion which appeals to the understanding, which acts upon the will, which moves the heart, and herein little can be done with men while they are in spiritual darkness. They must have light, or else they cannot see. And if they cannot see, they cannot receive. For looking to Jesus is the Gospel mode of receiving. So, beloved, the making of light was absolutely necessary in the world, and the creation of God's light in the heart of man is a most necessary work.

Next observe it was a very *early* work. Light was created on the first day, not on the third, fourth, or sixth, but on the first day. And one of the first operations of the Spirit of God in a man's heart is to give light enough to see his lost estate, and to perceive that he cannot save himself from it, but must look elsewhere.

Come, dear hearer, have you seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Are you resting upon Him as all your salvation and all your desire? Have you light enough to look to Him and to be saved, leaving all your former boastings, nailing them all to His cross, and taking Him to be your all in all? It is a very early work of divine grace, I say, to show you that you are a sinner, and to reveal to you that you have a Savior. It is the first day's work, and I have no right to believe myself to be a new creature in God at all, unless I have received light enough to know those two great and weighty facts—myself lost in Adam but saved in the second Adam, undone by sin, but restored by the Savior's righteousness.

It is well for us to remember that light-giving is a *divine* work. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. O beloved, how often have I said it, and there has been no light whatever! These eyes have often wept over unenlightened souls, but my glistening tears could not give them a ray of light! Have I not bowed my knee, and prayed full many a time for the conversion of men, and though prayer has power because it links man with God, yet in itself it has none, for our prayers for others can do nothing whatever for them till JEHOVAH Himself says, "Let there be light."

Dear hearer, the Lord must come into distinct and direct contact with your spirit or else your darkness will become the outer darkness of eternal ruin. Speak of what your free will can do, of what your creature ability can do! Alas, these can do nothing whatever for you! They will plunge you deeper and deeper into the blackness of darkness forever, but into the light of God you never can come and never will come, unless that eternal voice shall say, "Let there be light." Let us always remember this in preaching the Gospel, and never depend upon man, or upon the Word alone, but be this our prayer, "Oh God, do Your work, for You alone can do so effectually."

This divine work is *wrought by the Word*. God did not sit in solemn silence and create the light, but He spoke. He said, "Light be," and light was. So the way in which we receive light is by the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Christ Himself is the essential Word, and the preaching of Christ Jesus is the operative Word. We receive Christ actually when God's power goes with God's Word—then we have light. Hence the necessity of continually preaching the Word of God. If I preach my own word, no light will go with it, but when it is God's Word, then I may expect that light will follow.

Oh! to preach Christ's cross. My brethren and sisters, choose no ministry but that which savors much of God's Word, and especially of the Word Christ Jesus. Better to preach one sermon full of Christ, than a thousand in which He shall be left out. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The great magnet and loadstone of Gospel attraction is Christ Himself, and if we leave Him out, it is as though we should expect the world to receive light without the Almighty Word.

While light was conferred in connection with the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, it was *unaided by the darkness itself*. How could darkness assist to make itself light? Nay, the darkness never did become light. It had to give place to light, but darkness could not help God. If your understanding could resolve darkness into its elements, can you see anything in it which can help to bring the day? If you can, I cannot. Look at your own fallen nature, is there anything there which could assist in the great work of salvation? If you think so, you know not yourself!

The power which saves a sinner is not the power of man. The power of man must die, for its only use is to stand out as far as it is able against the power of God. For the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can be. You cannot extract out of any amount of darkness a single beam of light. And you cannot extract out of any amount of flesh, purify it, educate it, direct it, guide it as you may, you cannot extract anything like spiritual light, that must come from above.

“You must be born again.” Do not think Christians are made by education, they are made by creation. You may wash a corpse as long as ever you please, but you cannot wash *life* into it. You may deck it in flowers, and robe it in scarlet and fine linen, but you cannot make it live. The vital spark must come from above. Regeneration is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but by the power and energy of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God alone.

As this light was unassisted by darkness, so was it also *unsolicited*. There came no voice out of that thick darkness, “Oh God, enlighten us.” There was no cry of prayer, no note of desire that God would send light. The desire and the thought began with deity, not with the darkness. He said, “Let there be light, ” and there was light. The first work of grace in the heart does not begin with man’s desire, but with God’s implanting the desire. Dear hearer, if you desire to be saved by grace, God gave you that desire, for you could never get as far as that apart from Him. Your darkness can be darkness, and that is all it can be. It cannot long for, or aspire after light. In fact, if your soul longs after light, it has some light already—a sincere desire is a part of that divine light and life, and must have come from above.

See then the ruin of nature and the freeness of grace. Void and dark, a chaos given up to be covered with blackness and darkness forever, and while as yet it is unseeking God, the light arises, and the promise is fulfilled, “I am found of them that sought me not: I said, behold me! behold me, to a people that were not a people.” While we were lying in our blood, filthily polluted, defiled, He passed by, and He said in the sovereignty of His love, “Live, ” and we do live. The whole must be traced to sovereign grace. From this sacred well of discriminating, distinguishing grace, we must draw water this morning, and we must pour it out, saying, “Oh Lord, I will praise Your name, for the first origin of my light was Your sovereign purpose, and nothing in me.”

Before we leave this point I must have you notice that this light came *instantaneously*. The Hebrew suggests this far better than our translation, it is sublimely brief. “Light be: light was.” Here let us observe that the work of giving spiritual light is instantaneous. No matter through what process you may go which you may conclude afterward to have been preparatory to the light, and there is such a process, the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters before the light came, yet the absolute flash which brings salvation is instantaneous. A man is saved in a moment.

From death to life is not the work of years, it is done at once. Saul of Tarsus rides to Damascus foaming at the mouth with threats against God’s saints. Jesus Christ appears to him, and Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul the humble follower of Jesus, in a moment. And all conversions, though they may seem to you gradual, must be like this, for Paul says, “To me first God showed forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them that believe, ” as if Paul’s salvation was the pattern upon which all others are cut.

There must be a time in which you were dead, and then another instant in which you were alive. So with darkness. There must be a period in which you have no light, and another period in which you have some light, and that transition must be an instantaneous one. O that the Lord would work a great work this morning. It is in His power, if so He wills it, to turn every one of your hearts to Himself. Let Him but speak the word and say, “Light be!” and no matter how dark the sinner’s mind, if the divine decree shall go forth, “Light be, ” that depraved, foolish, drunken sinner will in a moment feel his heart begin to melt.

As it is instantaneous, so it is *irresistible*. Darkness must give place when God speaks. Some ascribe omnipotence to the will of man, and lift man up to a sort of rivalry with God. Beloved, man has power to resist the ordinary motions of the Spirit, but when the Holy Ghost comes to effectual work, and puts forth His mighty power, who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, “What dost Thou?” “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion, ” is the divine claim of old, and it is true of our God to this day. Oh! how glorious is God when we think of Him thus! I could not worship a little God, but when I think of my great God as looking down upon the blackness and darkness of human nature, and saying, “Let there be light, ” and light comes at once, then I magnify God for His grace, and bless His name!

II. The second point is DIVINE OBSERVATION.

We read in the fourth verse, “*And God saw the light.*” Does He not see everything? Yes, beloved, He does, but this does not refer to the general perception of God of all His works, but is something special. “God saw the light”, He looked at it with satisfaction, gazed upon it with pleasure. I received, this morning, great satisfaction in turning over those few words in my own mind, “God saw the light.” I thought to myself—Ah! the Lord looks with special observation upon His own work of grace in His people. If the Lord has given you His light, dear friend, no matter though you may only just now have received it, God looks on that light with an eye with which He does not view other things. He sees all other things in His omniscience, but He sees this light in you as His offspring, as dear to Himself as His own handiwork. He looks upon it with satisfaction. He sees it with tender observation.

A father looks upon a crowd of boys in a school, and sees them all, but there is one boy whom he sees very differently from all the rest. He watches him with care, it is his own child, and his eyes are especially there. Brethren, though you have come here sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, the Lord sees what is good in you, for He has put it there. Satan can see the light and he tries to quench it, God sees it and preserves it. The world can see that light and hates it, and would, if possible, extinguish it. But God sees it, and He restrains the world, that it cannot utterly take from you the vital spark.

Sometimes *you* cannot see the light, and I do not suppose it is in the nature of light to perceive itself, but God saw the light, and that is better. It is better that God should see grace in me than that I should see grace in myself. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God’s people—I cannot have much joy and peace in believing, unless I have the gracious assurance of this fact, but still that fact is not the foundation of my hope, for, whether *I* know it or not, if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. This is the foundation, “The LORD knows them that are his.”

You and I are apt to say of such a one, “What a Christian he is.” Very likely his religion is all external show, and the Lord has no regard unto his offering any more than He had unto the offering of Cain. We look at that Pharisee, standing in the Temple with his phylacteries, and hear him saying, “God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, ” and we envy him and think what a noble saint he is, but the Lord knows him, and sees no light in him. But that poor humble publican who stands in the corner and dares not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven cannot see any light in himself, but God sees the light in him, and that man goes down to his house justified rather than the other.

You may be today going down, down into the vaults of despondency and even despair, ah, but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are still seeking to rest in Him, God sees the light, and He will take care to discern between you and the darkness and to preserve you even to the day of His Son’s appearing. Beloved, it is most pleasant to the believer to know that God’s eye is never taken off from that work of grace which He has begun.

Here is a promise. “I, the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment lest any hurt it: I will keep it night and day.” Now this is—I must say again—this is a precious thought to those of you who have watched and guarded yourselves, and felt your own powerlessness to do so, and who are ready to give it up because you have thought, “Well, I cannot watch always and I fear I shall become a prey to temptation.” The Lord watches you and He sees the light. He has His eyes always fixed upon the work of grace that is in your soul.

It is observable that in the New Testament we find the apostles mentioning the virtues of the saints, but very seldom that they say anything about their faults. Take, for instance, Abraham. His faith is extolled, but nothing is said about his equivocation. In the case of Rahab, her faith is magnified, but nothing is said about her lying. Why is that? Is it not because God saw the light, and when He was writing this Book of the new creation, He said nothing of the darkness? He saw His own work and would not regard the devil’s work, and the work of fallen human nature too, but He had respect only to the light.

III. We pass on to the third point, and that is, DIVINE APPROBATION.

“God saw the light, *that it was good.*” Light is good in all respects. The *natural* light is good. Solomon says, “It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun.” But you did not need Solomon to inform you

upon that point. Any blind man who will tell you the tale of his sorrows will be quite philosopher enough to convince you that light is good. *Gospel* light is good. “Blessed are the eyes which see the things which you see.” You only need to travel into heathen lands, and witness the superstition and cruelty of the dark places of the earth, to understand that Gospel light is good.

As for *spiritual* light, those who have received it long for more of it, that they may see yet more and more the glory of heaven’s *essential* light! O God, You are of good the unmeasured Sea. You are of light both soul, and source, and center. Whether, then, we take natural light, Gospel light, spiritual light, or essential light, we may say of it, as God did, that it was good.

But we are speaking now of spiritual light. Why is that good? Well, it must be so, *from its source*. The light emanates from God, in whom is no darkness at all, and as it comes absolutely and directly from Him, it must be good. As every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, so everything which comes from above is good and perfect. The Lord distributes no alloyed metal, He never gives His people that which is mixed and debased. Your words, O God, are pure as silver tried in the furnace of earth purified seven times. The light of the new nature is good when we consider its origin.

It is good, again, when we consider *its likeness*. Light is like to God. It is a thing so spiritual, so utterly to be ungrasped by the hand of flesh, that it has often been selected as the very type of God. Certainly the new nature in man is like to God. It is, in fact, the nature of God implanted in us. The Holy Ghost dwells in us, and is the *radix*—the root of the new nature by which we become akin with the Most High. The Spirit of adoption by which we cry, “Abba, Father,” is the Holy Spirit Himself working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Ignatius used to call himself, Theophorus, or the God-bearer. The title might seem eccentric, but the fact is true of all the saints—they bear God about with them. God dwells in His saints as in a temple.

It is good, also in its *effect*. It is good for a man to know his danger—it makes him start from it. It is good for him to know the evil of his sin—it makes him avoid it, and repent of it. It is good for him to know a Savior’s love—it leads him to trust the Savior, and brings him to pardon, to justification, and to eternal life. It is good to have the light which reveals the God of love, for without Him we are aliens, orphans, houseless wanderers. It is good to have the light to see the world to come, that we may escape its agonies, that we may seek after its glories. It is good to have light in all respects, for otherwise, like blind men, we should wretchedly and miserably wander in a labyrinth, and miss our way to glory and to God. Light is good in its effects.

It is good, moreover, because it *glorifies God*. Where would God’s glory in the outward universe without light? Could we gaze upon the landscape? Could we stand upon the hilltop and drink in the view, and then praise the glorious Maker who had made these marvelous works if there were no light? I question whether those first-born sons of light, the angels, would have a song to sing before the eternal throne, if light were taken away.

Certainly, beloved, spiritual light brings glory to God. It prostrates us in the dust, but it lifts HIM up. Spiritual light shows us our emptiness, our poverty, our wretchedness, but it reveals in blessed contrast His fullness, His riches, His freeness of grace. The more light in the soul, the more gratitude to God. The more we know of Christ, and the covenant of grace, and of God Himself, the louder and sweeter is that song which our glad hearts send up to the eternal throne.

Let me say of the work of God in the soul as compared to light, that it is good in *the widest possible sense*. The new nature which God puts in us never sins, it cannot sin, because it is born of God. “What,” say you, “Does a Christian never sin?” Not with the new nature. The new nature never sins, the old nature sins. It is the darkness which is dark, the light is not darkness. The light is always light. It is not possible that the Christ who dwells in us could sin.

I again repeat the words, “He cannot sin, because he is born of God.” He keeps himself so that the evil one touches him not. What sin there is in the believer comes from the remnants of corruption. The spirit which is implanted never can sin, never can have communion with sin, any more than light can

have communion with darkness. It is good—so good that it is the very same life which shall enter heaven.

You must not suppose that a believer will have a new life granted to him when he gets to heaven. Beloved, he will never die. The flesh dies, but the new nature which God gives to us is as immortal as God Himself. It can neither be quenched here by temptation, nor there by the act of death. The love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord is everlasting, ever living. And though corruption and worms destroy this body, yet the new-born spirit, like the light, will never see corruption. Jesus Christ has Himself said, “He that lives and believes in me shall never die.”

The new nature shall never die. Its light shall develop itself from dawning twilight into the splendor of noonday, and shall abide everlastingly in fullness of glory, according to the promise, “Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.”

IV. Now I must, by your patience, take you to the next point, which is, DIVINE SEPARATION.

It appears that though God made light there was still darkness in the world. Read the fourth verse, “*And God divided the light from the darkness.*” Beloved, the moment you become a Christian, you will begin to fight. You will be easy and comfortable enough, as long as you are a sinner, but as soon as you become a Christian, you will have no more rest. John Bunyan was no great poet, but sometimes he struck out great truths of God in his rhymes. He has this one—

*“A Christian is seldom long at ease
When one trouble’s gone another doth him seize.”*

This is very true, because a believer is a double man. There are two principles in him. At first, there was but one principle, which was darkness. Now light has entered, and the two principles disagree. So observe this separation. One part of the divine work in the soul of man is to make a separation *in the man himself*. I will put this plainly, and it shall be a test between a child of God and the child of darkness this morning.

Do you feel an inward contention and war going on? Can you read these verses and understand them, they are very strange verses, they are taken out of the same psalm and follow each other. “So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold me by my right hand.” There are hundreds of people who, if you were to preach from that text would say, “Why the man contradicts himself. He makes himself out to be a beast, and yet he says he dwells near to God!” Ah, none but the believer knows that secret.

You remember the apostle Paul’s own words in the seventh chapter of Romans. Many stupid people who are ignorant of the inner life make it out that Paul could not have been a Christian at all when he wrote those words, but he was an advanced believer, and only advanced believers can sympathize with him. “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Permit me to put these two verses together, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who

walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” How can these two things be consistent? Ask the spiritual man, he will tell you, “The Lord divides between light and darkness.” Darkness, by itself, will go on comfortably enough, but when the Lord sends in light, there will be a conflict—a terrible conflict too—and you will find your own self divided into camps. You will find both Cain and Abel in your heart, Egyptians and Israelites in your soul, and if there be a David in your heart, there will be a Saul too.

Whereas there is a division within the Christian, there is certain to be *a division without*. As soon as ever the Lord gives to any believer light, he begins to separate himself from the darkness. The world’s religion used to satisfy him. If there was a pretty building, and a good-looking minister who could put his words well together, and garnish the altar finely, the child of darkness did not care what he heard—whether the Gospel was preached or not. But as soon as ever he receives the light of God, he cries, “All this is nothing to me, millinery, or anything else. I want light and truth, and I cannot go to hear anything but the Gospel.” He separates himself from the world’s religion, finds out where Christ is preached, and goes there.

Then as to society, the dead, carnal religionist can get on very well in ordinary society, but it is not so when he has light. I cannot go to light company, wasting the evening, showing off my fine clothes, and talking frivolity and nonsense. Where are the children of light? Very likely down in some Ragged School, where poor men and women seek to bless the little ones. That is the place for the child of light. It does not matter what particular class of society the saints belong to, we shall seek their society. We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. The light gathers to itself, and the darkness to itself.

My dear brethren, what God has divided, let us never unite. God has set an everlasting distance between the sheep and the goats, let us do the same. Christ went without the camp, bearing His reproach, let us therefore come out from among them and be separate. Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, let us be nonconformists to the world. Let us dissent from all sin, and be distinguished from the world, even as Jesus Christ was not of the world. This is a work of grace, then, to make a wondrous separation.

V. Next notice DIVINE NOMINATION.

Things must have names. Adam named the beasts, but God Himself named the day and the night. Observe the fifth verse, “And God called the light Day, and the darkness called he Night.” It is a very blessed work of grace to teach us to call things by their right names. Why did He call the light day and the darkness night, except for this reason, He seems to say, “Let these things be *distinguished*, let light wear its name of *day*, and darkness its title of *night*.” From which I gather that the good which God works in His people must be good always, and can never be described as bad.

The spiritual aspirations of God’s people never can be evil. Carnal reason calls them folly, but the Lord would have us call them good. Here is a man who is panting after graces which will cost him great sacrifices, panting after a spirituality which will separate him from men. It cannot be evil for him to seek the highest possible degree of grace. On the other hand, that which is darkness cannot be light, and must not be called anything but night.

We have heard of some who have taken the sins of God’s people and said, “These are not sins in these people.” This is a grievous error, for darkness is darkness, and must be called night wherever it may be, and if I find sin in my father or mother, dearly as I love them, and desire to have them perfect, yet I must not make excuse for it and seek to call darkness day. I must not in myself, when I discern imperfection, find a soft name for it by which I may take away its wickedness. I must call it what it is.

I remember hearing of a good man, I believe he was such, who fell into drunkenness on one occasion. He was excommunicated from church fellowship, and properly so. But afterwards he became very penitent, and he went about the streets like a man who really should die of grief, and ashamed because of his sin. He could not find peace. A dear brother, who knew something of him, took him aside one day, and said, “Dear brother, have you made a full confession of your sin before God?” He thought he had. “Now,” said the other, “it is a hard thing for me to ask, but I should like to hear you confess this

sin.” So he did. When he came to the act of confessing his sin to God, he said, “Lord, You know I have indulged my appetites, ” and so on. He was not a bit better. “Now, ” said his friend, “My dear brother, you had better unveil your whole sin, and hide nothing.” Then he prayed thus, “Lord, You know *I got drunk.*” It was all right as soon as he brought the thing out, and called the darkness night, and went no longer round about.

The Lord will not hear His people if they call the darkness day. He will not attend to them. He will have them call darkness night. So, let us go where we may, whether in ourselves or in other people, we must learn to call a spade a spade, to call things by their right names. There is a great deal, remember, in the names which we give to things, because they are generally the index of our own estimation of what those things are. It is a work of grace to teach us always to call the light day, and the darkness night.

“But ” says one, “can’t the right sometimes be wrong?” Never, never. I am asked by a man this question. “There is such and such a church. I am a minister there, and there are some things I don’t agree with, and yet I swear I do. I swear that, *ex animo*, I agree, although I do not. If I did not swear, I should lose my sphere of usefulness. If I don’t swear it, I shall never have an opportunity of doing good.” My dear friend, you have nothing to do with that. Whether you are doing good or mischief, your business is to call darkness night, and light day. Never do a bad thing, though you might hope to achieve a world of good by it. Right is never wrong and wrong is never right. It cannot be right for a man to do evil that good may come. Of those who hold such maxims it is written, “Their damnation is just.” Let the light be called day and the darkness night.

Observe again—this is somewhat remarkable—that we read in the next sentence, “And the evening and the morning were the first day.” Who called it so? I do not find that God did, yet it is in the book of God and therefore I cannot take exception to it. How is it? The evening! Why the evening was darkness and the morning was light. The two together are called by the same name that is given to the light alone! What then?

Why beloved, in every believer there is darkness and there is light, and yet he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him, but he is to be named from the major part of him, he is to be named from the grander quality. He is to be named a *saint* because there is saintness in him notwithstanding all the sin. Now this will be a comforting thought to those of you who are mourning your infirmities.

While I was talking about light, you said, “Yes, thank God I have some. I know the difference between it and darkness, yet for all that, darkness is my daily pest and trouble. Can I be a child of God while there is any darkness in me?” Dear brethren, you like the day take not your name from the evening, but from the morning. From the day you shall be called altogether, as if you were now perfectly what you will be soon. You shall be called the child of the light though there is darkness in you still. You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the only principle remaining.

Observe that the evening is put first. We naturally have darkness first, and it is often first in our mournful apprehension, as we have to come to God with, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” The place of the morning is second, for it only dawns because of divine grace. But O beloved, it is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan, that that which is last, lasts forever. That which is first, has to give up its turn to the last. But nothing comes after the last. So that, though I am darkness, when once I am light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow. Your sun shall no more go down. The first day in this life is an evening and a morning, but the second day, when we shall be with God forever, shall be a day with no evening, but one, sacred, high, eternal noon.

I have thus opened up a few experiential secrets. Some of you can say, “I understand it, for I feel it all in my life. I trust I am a new creature.” Dear friends, let me congratulate you. Let me say to you, “Walk in the light of God. Live as children of the light. Be you ever with your faces towards the sun. Seek Christ, long to be made like Him, and never be content till, like the angel whom Milton speaks of, who dwells in the sun, you come to dwell in God, and lose yourself most blessedly by being swallowed up and filled with all the fullness of His glory.”

As for others here present, and I fear there are some such, who have said, "This is all strange to me." Dear friend, I pray God it may not be long strange to you, for if you are a stranger to a new creation, you are a stranger to the only hope of happiness. "You must be born again," is the old sentence which divine revelation has spoken—"you *must*." It is not, "You *may* be," it is, "You *must*." It is not, "Some of you may do without it, you are so good you do not need it." No, "You *must*, you *must* be born again."

He Who sits on the throne says, "Behold I make all things new." Has He made *you* new? The gates of heaven are shut against the old creation, the floods destroyed it at the first, the floods of fire shall destroy it yet again. If you are not newly-created, you shall not outlive the general blaze. The first creation must be swept away. And you, if you are not new created, must be swallowed up in everlasting misery.

But if God has made you a new creature, that new creation is not to be touched by fire, nor flood, nor death, nor grave. You, as a part of that new creation, shall sing in the New Jerusalem which shall come down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. You shall tread her golden streets, delight in her jasper radiance, and sing with the mighty hosts in that day when they shall sing a new song unto the Lord who has created all things new.

The Lord grant we may be all present in the New Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of all the saints, and unto God be praise, world without end. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON, John 1, 3:18, and 1 Thessalonians 5

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