

JOYFUL TRANSFORMATIONS

NO. 847

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 27, 1868,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.”
Isaiah 42:16

IN the pursuit of holiness the pilgrim is often surrounded with darkness; while in the pathway of evil the traveler is dazzled with a glare of light; it is the way of the tempter to make the downward path as attractive as possible with the flaring splendor of carnal pleasure; sin is surrounded with a fascinating luster which enchants the unwary seeker of pleasure, and leads him to his own destruction. Look at the palace of firewater, dedicated to the demon of drunkenness—it is brighter than any other house in the street; see how it glitters with abundant lamps, and mirrors, and burnished brass; rich with color are the flowers which bloom at the mouth of the old serpent's den. As the sirens in the old classic fable enchanted mariners with their songs, so that beneath the spell of their music, they turned the prows of their vessels towards the rocks of sure destruction, even so sin compels the sons of men to make shipwreck of their souls. Evil seems to be surrounded evermore with a light that dazzles and fascinates, even as the brightness of the candle attracts the moth to its destruction. As for the way of *righteousness* and *truth*, it appears from the text that murky clouds frequently rest upon it, and the way appears rough and crooked; otherwise it were not necessary to say, “I will make darkness light before them.” Neither is it necessary that a divine hand should interfere to make the crooked straight. Brothers and sisters, the day of evil commences with a flattering morning, and changes into a tenfold night, but God's day, the day of good, begins at eventide. Like the primeval days of the creation, the evening and the morning were the first day; we who follow the Lord Jesus have our *night* first, and our day has yet to dawn, the sun of which shall no more go down. God keeps the best wine until the last for us, while at the banquet of Satan, they set forth the best wine, and afterwards that which is worse. Yes, the dregs are wrung out in the end for the wicked of the earth to drink, but as for the righteous, they have their draughts of wormwood *here*, before their high festival begins, to give them appetite and zest for the banquets where wines on the lees well-refined shall satiate their souls!

The subject of this morning is the great promise of God, that although His people shall sometimes be enveloped in gloom, their darkness shall be turned to light. Before the advance of faith the most terrible things lose their terror. We shall use this one truth of God *in reference to believers first*, and then briefly turn it to the *encouragement of earnest seekers*.

I. First, in addressing THE BELIEVER, let us ring the bell of the text again. It has a sweet silver voice—“*I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.*”

Believer, observe that there often lies before you a grim darkness. Upon that darkness let us make these comforting observations; first, that much of the darkness is of your own imagining; as we feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, so do we feel a thousand afflictions in the fear of sorrows which will never come. Probably the major part of our griefs are born, nourished, and perfected entirely in an anxious, imaginative brain. Many of our sorrows are not woven in the loom of providence, but are purely homespun, and the pattern of our own invention. Some minds are especially fertile in self-torture; they have the creative faculty for all that is melancholy, desponding, and wretched; if they were placed in the brightest isles beneath unclouded skies where birds of fairest wing poured out perpetual melody, and earth was rich with color and perfume, they would not be content till they had imagined for themselves a sevenfold Styx, an infernal Tartarus, a valley of death-shade! Their ingenuity is stimulated even by the mercies of God, and that which would make others *rejoice* causes them to *tremble* lest the enjoyment should prove short-lived; like certain painters, they delight in heavy masses of shade. My brother, my sister, *you may perhaps have before your mind this very morning what seems a thick wall of horror, and yet it is nothing but a cloud!* Waiting, you imagine the obstruction to increase, but plucking up courage, and advancing to meet the imaginary horror, you will yet laugh at yourself and at your foolish fears; and

you will wonder how it was that you ever could have been cast down at nothing at all—and distressed by that which had no existence except in your dreams! I remember well, one night, having been preaching the word in a country village. I was walking home alone along a lonely footpath; I do not know what it was that ailed me, but I was prepared to be alarmed when, sure enough, I saw something standing in the hedge—ghastly, giant-like, and with outstretched arms! Surely, I thought, for once I have come across the supernatural! Here is some restless spirit performing its midnight march beneath the moon, or some demon of the pit of hell! I deliberated with myself a moment, and having no faith in ghosts, I plucked up courage and resolved to solve the mystery. The monster stood on the other side of a ditch, right in the hedge; I jumped the ditch and found myself grasping an old tree which some waggish body had taken pains to color with a little whitewash—with a view to frighten simpletons, no less! That old tree has served me a good turn full often, for I have learned to *leap at difficulties* and find them vanish or turn to triumphs! Half our afflictions are only appalling in prospect because we do not know what they are; if we will but in faith patiently await them, they will be but light and transient; thus by chasing away the gloom of our dark imagination, God often makes darkness light before us.

Much again, of the darkness which does really exist is *exaggerated*. There is some cause for alarm, but not one half the cause which your fancy pictures. “All these things are against me,” says Jacob, “Joseph is not, Simeon is not; and now you will take Benjamin away.” There was something in this complaint. Joseph was not with his father, Simeon was kept in ward—but the old man had pictured Joseph devoured of an evil beast, and Simeon given up to be a perpetual slave in a foreign land; his fears had magnified the trouble which existed. And, believer, so probably it is with you. You shall find that the load which seems now to be far too ponderous for you to lift shall be easily carried on the shoulders which divine grace shall strengthen if you have but confidence enough to venture upon the task. That cross is not made of iron—it is only a wooden one; it may be painted with iron colors, but iron it is not! It has been carried, yes, and a weightier one by far has been carried by other men before—shoulder it like a man, shoulder it like a man of God! Take up your cross daily and go forward with your Master, and you shall find that mountains shrink to molehills, giants are seen to be but dwarfs, dragons and beasts are but bats and owls, and the leviathan himself, a defeated foe!

Remember, too, that in many cases *troubles disappear at the very moment when we expect them to be overwhelming*. While we are anticipating them, they seem to block up the pathway completely, and leave no door of escape, but on our venturesome advance to them, they are not there at all, they have fled before us! See the host of Israel, they have escaped out of Egypt, but they are pursued by their taskmasters. They come to a spot where they are enclosed on either hand by mountains, while the chariots of Egypt are in the rear; how is it possible for them to escape? They are entangled in the land; the wilderness has shut them in! “Forward,” cries the prophet, “forward, hosts of God!” But how can they advance? The Red Sea rolls right in their path; but no sooner do the feet of the priests touch the waters of the sea, than the depths are divided—the waters stand upright as a heap, for God has made a pathway for His people through the heart of the sea! No better road could be desired than that which they found in the sandy bed of the sea. The trouble which certainly appeared insurmountable, became the subject of triumph; Miriam’s song, and the voices of the daughters of Israel had in them a higher exultation than they could ever have known if they had not been able to cry aloud, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” Brothers and sisters, your trials may in a like case vanish as soon as you arrive at them! You do not know what plan God has in store; He has an unused shaft which shall be the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance for you; the Lord has a counterplot for the plots of your enemies. You see but a part of His scheme—you have not as yet discovered the whole of His resources, and when He brings out His wonderful plan more fully, you will stand in amazement, and even bless His name for the trial because it furnished so noble an opportunity for revealing to you the faithfulness and the power of your God! The same thing which occurred at the Red Sea also happened to the hosts of God when they came to the Jordan, for Jordan was driven back, and fled at the presence of the God of Israel! If you should have trouble upon trouble, you shall also experience deliverance upon deliverance! Think of that mighty instance in which it was proved that God can clear the darkest skies, and give us day for night! I refer to the case of Hezekiah. What a blasphemous and insulting letter was that which came from Rabshakeh! What reviling language was that which the foul-mouthed lieutenant of Sennacherib hurled at Judah’s king! Poor Hezekiah was a man of a holy and tender spirit, and was sorely dismayed, but when he spread that wretched letter before the Lord, and bowed himself in sackcloth, little did he know how graciously God would prevent the sorrow from ever

coming to him in any other shape but in that of *talk* and *boasting*! “Thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it; by the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, says the Lord.” And so it was! And so, O child of God, may it be with the troubles which now block *your* pathway—they shall vanish as you advance!

Reflect, again, that where this does not exactly occur, and the trial *does* really come, yet the Lord has a way of making the trials of His people to cease when they reach their culminating point. As the sea, when it reaches the highest mark of flood, can advance no further; but after pausing for a while to enjoy the fullness of its strength, must then return to its ebb, so with our most desperate sorrows; they reach the point designed and then they recede. See Abraham! God had bade him sacrifice his son; Abraham, probably mistaking the Lord’s meaning, thought that he was to slay the child of promise! He proceeds to Mount Moriah, piles the altar, takes with him the wood, binds his son, and places him upon the altar. But just as he has unsheathed the knife, and is about to perform the act of solemn obedience by sacrificing that which he held most dear, a voice is heard—“Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you anything unto him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.” In the nick of time God intervenes, but mark when that is—namely when the patriarch has proved the *complete* renunciation of his *own* will, and given up everything to the *will of God*—then deliverance comes! So shall it be with you, O tried believer! When the trial has been submitted to in your own heart, and you have laid aside your self-will and obstinacy, and are no longer murmuring, and repining, and rebelling—then shall God take away the coals of the furnace because the gold is purified! That is a grand story of Alexander’s confidence in his friend and physician. When the physician had mixed him a potion for his sickness, a letter was put into Alexander’s hand warning him not to drink the medicine, for it was poisoned. He held the letter in one hand, and the cup in the other, and in the presence of his friend and physician, he drank up the draught; and after he had drained the cup, he bade his friend look at that letter and judge of his confidence in him. Alexander had unstaggering faith in his friend, which did not admit of doubt. “See now,” he said, “how I have trusted you.” This is the assurance which the believer should exercise towards his God. The cup is very bitter, and some tell us it will prove to be deadly; they tell us that it is so nauseous that we shall never survive the draught; Unbelief whispers in our ear, “Your coming tribulation will utterly crush you.” Drink it, my brothers and sisters, and say “If He slays me, yet will I trust in Him!” It cannot be that God could be unfaithful to His promise, or unmindful of His covenant! Your trial, then, will cease when it culminates; He will make darkness light before you when the darkest hour of the night has struck.

Brothers and sisters, there is one most encouraging reflection concerning the adversity which lies before us, namely, that every trial of our pilgrimage life was *foreseen of God, and we may depend upon it that it has been forestalled*. Many a besieged city has been captured because the siege was not expected, and therefore stores of provision and ammunition were not laid up for the evil day. But God, who laid up seven years of food in Egypt against the seven years of famine which He ordained, takes care to lay by in store for His saints against coming emergencies. How readily might Moses have been anxious about the food for the tribes in the desert! “How shall such a host be fed? Where shall we find water? Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” But in simple faith Moses led the chosen people into the wilderness, and lo, the heavens dropped with a rain of plenty, and the flinty rock gave forth its cooling streams so that the host knew no lack for 40 years! Though they had neither gathered harvests nor vintage in all that space of time, yet *did Jehovah provide!*

Once more be it remembered that if trial should come upon any one of us in its fullest force, and in no way should God mitigate the fury of the storm, yet we have His promise for it, and may rest confidently therefore, that as our days, our strength shall be. I think I have before remarked to you that to be exempt from trouble would not be a desirable thing, for the life of a man who has no trial is uneventful, poor of incident, uninteresting, ignoble, barren; but the life of a man who has done business in great waters has something noble and manly in it! And considering that divine grace is always proportioned to the trial, I think it were wise to choose the trial for the sake of obtaining the grace which is promised with it! I noticed in a shop window last week a little invention of singular interest. A small metal wire with a circular disk at each end was suspended by a thread and continued, without ceasing, to oscillate between two small galvanic batteries, first touching one, and then the other. A little card informed me that this piece of metal had continued to move to and fro between those two batteries for more than 30 years, and had, during that time passed over 6,000 miles! The whole affair was so enclosed within a

glass case that nothing was likely to disturb it, and so it kept the even tenor of its way with a history which could be summoned up in two lines of plainest prose—to and fro, to and fro, for 30 years, and that was its whole monotonous history! Men's quiet lives are much after the same order; they have gone to business on Monday morning, and home at night; the same on Tuesday and all the days of the year—no dire struggles, no fierce temptations, no gracious victories, no divine experiences of heavenly love; their whole inner life is meager of interest because so free from every trial. But look at the man who is subject to trials—temporal and spiritual, and acquainted with difficulties of every sort, he is like yon mass of iron on the prow of a gallant ship which has crossed the Pacific, and bathed itself in the Atlantic! Storms have dashed upon it; a myriad waves have broken over it; it has seen the terrors of all the seas, and gleamed in the sunlight of both hemispheres; it has served its age most gloriously—and when old and worn with rust, a world of interest surrounds it.

Let us, if our trials multiply, remember that divine grace in abundance will be given with them, and the mingled trial and the grace will make our lives sublime, prevent our being mere dumb driven cattle, and give us kinship with those who, through much tribulation, have ascended to their thrones! The battle and the storm, the strife and the victory, the depression and the uplifting, and all else that betides us in a varied and eventful life, shall help to make our eternal rest and glory the more sweet to us. Let us leave these musings upon expected glooms, relying confidently upon the promise that the Lord will make darkness light before us, by some means or other, and will in no wise fail us in the hour of need!

For a minute or two let me more especially invite you again, children of God, to dwell upon the promise that the Lord will make your darkness light. How soon can Omnipotence accomplish this! It takes *us* much time to create light; we must form companies and erect machinery before we can turn the night of our great cities into a partial day! But tomorrow morning, however black the previous night may have been, the great Father of Lights will illuminate our whole nation in a few minutes; He will make each wave of the sea, and each dewdrop of the lawn to gleam with silvery sheen! God has but to bid the sun accomplish his course, and the world is lit up and the shadows flee away! How perfectly the work is done! The illumination is unrivalled in lavish glory. All *our* means of enlightenment are poor when compared with the sunlight, and so scant that we must measure its cubic feet and dole it out for gold, while the Lord pours His infinitely superior illumination in measureless oceans over hill and dale, field and city—gladdening the cottage as well as the palace, and burnishing the beetle's wings as well as the eagle's pinions! Even thus our heavenly Father can readily enough turn the deepest sorrows of His people into the most sublime joys, and He needs not to vex the sons of men with labor in order to achieve His purpose of pity! His own right hand, His own gracious Spirit can pour forth a fullness of consolation in a moment.

Notice for your comfort some of the ways in which the Lord of Love banishes the midnight of the soul: sometimes He removes all gloom by the sun of His providence; He bids prosperity shine into the window of the hovel, and the poor grow rich; He lifts the beggar from the dunghill, and sits him among princes; the wings of angels bear healing to the sick, and the man long tossing on his bed walks forth to breathe the pure sweet air so long denied him. The great Arbiter of all events does but turn the wheel of fortune, and those who were lowest are highest—the last are first, and the first last! He can do the same for any of us, both in temporals, and in spirituals, if so it seems good to Him; He has but to ordain it so, and our poverty will be exchanged for plenty. Our Lord often cheers His people with the moon of their experience, which shines with borrowed light, but yet with a brightness, calm and tranquil, well-beloved of the sons of sorrow. He bids us remember the days of old, and our spirit makes diligent search—we find that He has never left His people, neither has He been treacherous to us! We remember when we were in a like case to the present; we note that we were well sustained and ultimately delivered; and so we are encouraged to believe that today shall be as the past, and yet more abundant. Frequently our heavenly Father cheers His children by *a sight of Jesus going before them*. That path between overhanging rocks is so dark, that I, a poor timid child, shrink back from it; but how is my courage restored as I see Jesus bearing the lantern of His love, and going before me into the thick darkness! I hear Him say, "Follow Me," and while He speaks I perceive a light streaming from His sacred person! Every thorn of His crown gleams like a star! The jewels of His breastplate flash like lamps, and His wounds gleam with celestial splendor! "Fear not," He says, "for in all your afflictions I have been afflicted; I was tempted in all points like as you are, though without sin." Who can tell the encouragement given to the heir of heaven by the fact that the elder brother has passed through all the dark passages which leads to the promised rest! God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without chastisement; He who al-

ways did His Father's will, yet had to suffer. Courage, my heart! Courage! If Jesus suffered—if that pang which tears your heart first was felt by Him, you may be of good cheer indeed!

Better still is the comfort derived from the grand truth of God that Jesus is actually present in the daily afflictions of believers! Jesus knocks at my door and says, "Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse; come with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards!" I look forth from the window into the cold and dreary night, and I answer Him, "The night is black and cheerless; I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? I cannot arise and follow You." But the Beloved is not thus to be refused. He knocks again, and He says, "Come forth with Me into the fields, let us lodge in the villages. There will I give you My loves." Overcome by His love, I arise and go with my heavenly Bridegroom; if the raindrops fall pitilessly upon me, yet it is most sweet to see that His head is also filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night; the howling wind tosses His garments as well as mine; His feet tread the same miry places as my own, and all the while He calls me His beloved, His love, His dove, His undefiled, and tells me of the land which lies beyond the darkness. And He speaks of the mountains of myrrh, and of the beds of spices—the top of Amana, Shenir, and Hermon! My soul is melted while my beloved speaks, and my heart feels it is sweet beyond expression to walk with Him, for lo, while He is near me, the night is lit up with innumerable stars, the sky is aglow with glory—every cloud flames like a seraph's wing, while the pitiless blast is all unable to chill the heart which burns within while He talks with me by the way! In later years you and I are apt to speak to one another of that dark night and its marvelous brightness, of that cold wind that was so strangely tempered; and we will say to one another, "I would gladly pass through a thousand nights in such company! I would be willing to go on a midnight journey forever with that dearest of friends, for oh, where He is, night is day! In His presence, suffering is joy! When He reveals Himself, pains are pleasures, and earth blossoms with flowers of Eden." Thus does the Well-Beloved by His presence make our darkness light.

Oftentimes you and I have known by experience how the Lord has made our darkness light when in a moment a text of Scripture has flashed up before our eyes like a beacon fire. I bless God there are parts of this precious book which I do not only retain in my memory, but in my heart. They have been so applied to my soul in times of need that to forget them would be utterly impossible! They have burned their way into my inner nature, and have become part and parcel of my consciousness. You cannot of yourself, make a text so full of life and power by merely thinking of it—nor by praying over it, nor by studying the original, but the Holy Spirit quickens the word even as He quickens us. A word from the Lord will at times rise up from the page as though it had lain there like a sleeping angel; it will grasp us by the hand, embrace us, and revive us till in wonder we cry out, "Oh, precious and inexhaustible word of God! Oh, sweet word fresh from the lips of Jesus, how is it I could have read you so often, but never understood your fullness and preciousness till now?" This is one of the ways of the Lord by which He makes darkness light, by snatching a firebrand from the altar of His word, and waving it as a torch before us that we may advance in its light!

Thus you see, beloved, God can readily turn our darkness into light. Now the text leads us a little further, and speaks of "*crooked things*." So, Christian, for a moment think of the crooks of your lot. Like the pathway of the children of Israel through the wilderness, your course appears to be backward and forward like the path which winds deviously through the woods among briars and thorns; the faithful Friend of pilgrims knows the way that you take—all your steps are ordered of the Lord, and in due time, according to His word, He will make them all straight for you. Perhaps the crookedness of your lot lies in your poverty; you never have more than barely enough; food and raiment you have had, but still it has been dry bread, and scant raiment. So far from faring sumptuously, you have almost known the need of Lazarus at the rich man's gate; you have reached thus far on your journey, but still yours has been a life of need and great distress. You thank God! You do not repine—still you know well that need is a *crooked thing*!

Or perhaps you have suffered some very crooked calamity; your dear husband was taken away when the children needed most his training care, and when the labor of those strong arms was needed to find sustenance for the little ones. Alas, poor widow, that was a very crooked loss for you! Or perhaps yonder husband has buried his beloved wife, and feels that his loss is irreparable—a crooked thing which he cannot understand! He cannot guess why the all-wise God has permitted such a mother to be taken from children who needed her molding hand; if some other people had died, you could have comprehended the reason—they were ripe and ready, but here was the young and active whose life appeared so neces-

sary, and she has been taken away from you, leaving behind a fountain of perennial tears. This is the crooked thing in your lot. Perhaps during the late panic you suffered very severely. You had not been one of the speculators, and had not ventured beyond your depth, but still, incidentally the fall of others dragged you down. You do not quite understand the reason for that heavy blow; it is a crooked thing altogether; you have looked at it this way and that way, but you cannot see the why and the wherefore. You believe that God is wise, but it remains a matter of belief in this case—you cannot as yet see it to be a wise thing. Possibly your crook lies in a trying family at home. Woe to those who have crooked sons—sharper than an adder's tooth is an unthankful child! Have you a graceless daughter? Alas, what a trial is yours! Have you an ill-tempered, malicious wife, or a harsh, unchristian husband? Do you yourself love the truth of God, and have you a partner who hates good things? Will you go home today to hear the voice of blasphemy from your next of kin? Yours is a crook, indeed!

Worse than all, if you have no other crook, I am sure you will confess to a crooked *self*. If your own heart were not your plague, all the rest would matter little. Oh, what with our pride, our sloth, our evil desires, our angry temper, our doubts and fears, and despondencies, *self* is the worst crook a man has to carry! Then it may be you have crooked temptations. You are tempted to profanity; you hate the very thought of it, but still, the horrible suggestions haunt you! You are tempted to vices from which, by divine grace, you have been preserved, but towards which as with a hurricane, Satan would whirl you! Your temptations abound day by day; you appear to yourself to be like a man beset with 10,000 bees—they compass you about, yes, they compass you about, and you know not how to destroy them! As many as your thoughts, so many your temptations seem to be. Well, these are all crooked things, and in such a fallen world as this, crooked things will always be very common.

Now comes the promise—"God will make all the crooked things in the way of His people straight." It may be that they are straight now, and that the making straight is only to make them seem so to us, for oftentimes that which we thought to be a misfortune was the best thing that could ever occur to us! We complain of our crosses, yet are not our crosses our best estates? How often we kick against our highest good; we tear up that herb in the garden which has the noblest medicine in every leaf; oh for grace to know that there is much real good in *sorrow*, and that our trials are only crooked because our eyes are not focused!

The Lord also can bend the crooked straight, and what will not bend He can break. How often in a family the ungodly Saul has been made into a holy Paul! The crooked character has been bent straight—and where the man would not bend straight, the terrible judgment of God has taken away the crook out of the household, so that the righteous might have peace and comfort! Do not be afraid, believer—the Lord's great axe can clear a way through the thick forests of your greatest trials! Do you not see the great Pioneer going before you; His goings forth were of old, and by the name of "The Breaker" is He known, since He breaks down all that can hinder the march of His people. Like the engineers in the advance of an army, those grand old sappers and miners who clear the way for the host; even so will the Lord cast up a highway for all His saints until He shall bring them to the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is He.

If He does not do this, He will give you power to leap over the difficulty; He will bid you, His servant, go straight on in the path of duty; and strength, not your own, shall be given you so that you shall say with one of old, "By my God have I gone through a troop! By my God have I leaped over a wall." You shall cry like Deborah, "O my soul, you have trod down strength." If our pathways were always clear in the way of duty, where would be our faith? But when we force our way to heaven through crowds of enemies—hewing a lane by main force through the squadrons of hell, *then* is our great Captain glorified, and His grace made resplendent! Let us be of good courage then, for the Lord will make the crooked straight at the end!

Two lessons, and then I shall turn to address a few words to the seeker. One is to the child of God; if God will thus make all your darkness light, and all your crooked things straight, do not prevent your troubles; they are darkness now; leave them alone, man, and they will turn to light! They are crooked now—well, leave them to ripen, and God will make them straight. Some fruit which you gather from your trees is of such a nature that if you were to try and eat it in the autumn, it would be very sour, and would make you very sick, but just store it up a little, and see how luscious and juicy it becomes! It is a pity to destroy the fruit, and pain yourself by premature use! It is just so with your troubles; they are all darkness now—do not meddle with them. Leave them till God has ripened them and turned them into light. Yonder man is employed in carrying sacks of flour every day; he carries so many hundredweight

each time, and in the day it comes to tons, and so many tons a day will come to an enormous mass in a year. Now, suppose on the first of January this man was to calculate the year's load and say, "I have all that immense mass to carry! I cannot do it!" You would remind him that he has not to carry it *all at once*—he has all the workdays of the year to carry it in. So we put all our troubles together and we cry, "However shall I get over them?" Well, they will only come one at a time, and as they come, the strength will come with them! A man who has walked a thousand miles did not traverse the thousand miles at a step, nor in a day; he took his time and did it. And we also, must take our time; with patience we shall accomplish our work. A fine lesson for us all is that word *wait*, wait, WAIT.

Our second remark is this, always believe in the power of prayer, for if God promises to make your darkness light, He will be required to do it for you; and when you inquire of Him to do it, He will do it because He has so promised. I wish we believed in prayer; I am afraid most of us do not. People will say, "What a wonderful thing it is that God hears George Muller's prayers!" But is it not a *sad* thing that we should think it *wonderful* for God to hear prayer? We have certainly come to a pretty pass when we think it wonderful that God is true! Much better faith was that of a little boy in one of the schools at Edinburgh who had attended the prayer meetings, and at last said to his teacher who conducted the prayer meeting, "Teacher, I wish my sister could be got to read the Bible. She never reads it." "Why, Johnny, should your sister read the Bible?" "Because if she should once read it, I am sure it would do her good, and she would be converted and be saved." "Do you think so, Johnny?" "Yes, I do, sir, and I wish the next time there's a prayer meeting, you would ask the people to pray for my sister that she may begin to read the Bible." "Well, well, it shall be done, John." So the teacher announced that a little boy was very anxious that prayers should be offered that his sister might begin to read the Bible, but little John was observed to get up and go out. The teacher thought it very unkind of the boy to disturb the people in a crowded room, and go out like that, and so the next day when the lad came, he said, "John, I thought that was very rude of you to get up in the prayer meeting and go out; you ought not to have done it." "Oh! sir," said the boy, "I did not mean to be rude, but I thought I should just like to go home and see my sister reading her Bible for the first time." That is how we ought to believe, and wait with expectation to see the answer to prayer! The girl *was* reading the Bible when the boy went home; God had been pleased to hear the prayer, and if we could but trust God after that fashion, we should often see similar things accomplished! Do not say, "Lord, turn my darkness into light," and then go out with your candle as though you expected to find it dark; but, after asking the Lord to appear for you, expect Him to do so, for according to your faith so will it be done unto you!

II. And now, just a few words before we depart, TO THE SEEKER.

Some here have long been desirous of finding peace with God, but they are still troubled, and tossed to and fro in their minds. Now, my dear friend, we have felt great joy in seeing your anxiety, but we are beginning to feel great sorrow to think that that anxiety should last so long, and that you should be so unbelieving as not at once to put your trust in the blessed Lord Jesus. He is *able* to save you, and He *will* save you right now, if you trust Him. It seems a very simple thing to rest alone on Him, and simple as it is, it is most effectual for the soul's peace and joy. We are grieved to think that you have been so long refusing to give Christ the credit which He so richly deserves. Now, perhaps it may be you are puzzled about some *doctrinal* question; you have been asking your friends to explain this and that to you, and you have not yet had it all cleared up. Let me say I am afraid you never will—for there are difficulties about our holy religion which will never be explained on this side the grave, and perhaps not even on the other! If our religion were within our comprehension, we would feel it did not come from God; but being greater than our brain can grasp, we see in this some traces of the infinite God who, in revealing Himself, does not display all His glory, but only a part of it to the sons of men. Dear friend, believe that God's dear Son is able to save you, and trust in Him! When you have done that, all these doctrinal difficulties, as far as they are at all important will vanish! He has said it, and you shall prove it true, "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." You shall say to yourself, "How could I have raised so many quibbles? How foolish it was of me to be always debating and questioning when eternal mercy was freely presented to me!"

Perhaps your darkness today arises from a very deep depression of mind. Your notion is that you can never believe in Jesus Christ till this depression is removed; but let me tell you your notion is wide of the truth, for the fact is you are not at all likely to rise out of your depression until you *first* believe in Jesus! Sad and sorrowful as you are, what hinders you to believe in the infinite Son of God as able to put away your sin? He must be able; the death of such a one must have had an amount of merit in it not to be

limited; oh, if you can do Him the honor to trust Him, though you are like poor smoking flax, He will not quench you! Though you are worthless and weak as a bruised reed, yet if you can trust Him, you are saved! O rely on Him, I pray you! For your soul's sake rest in the precious blood and you shall find your depression vanish, your darkness shall be light, and your crooked things shall be made straight! "Ah," you say, "but I labor under a load of sin!" Truly there is enough in your sin to make you troubled *were it not that for this purpose Christ was born and came into the world, that He might take away sin!* Why that great sacrifice on Calvary's cross, if not for great offenses? Don't you see that it is the very blackness of your sin that makes you *need* a Savior? Don't you know that Christ came not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance? In due time He died for the ungodly such as you; O throw your weary soul into His arms! Why do you look about after this and that? Why are you deceived with, "Lo here, and lo there," looking to this and that for comfort? Come to Him! Come empty, naked, and filthy! Come to be made everything that is good through Him! "Yes, but," you say, "my nature is so evil." Well, but your depravity is known and provided for in the text. Your sinfulness, like the crookedness mentioned in the text, shall be made straight! The Lord can overcome your natural disposition; whatever the peculiar form of your besetting sin, the Holy Spirit is more than a match for it! Though you have sinned very foully, He can forgive, and though you feel a strong temptation to sin in the same way again, He can correct the tendency in your nature, and give you new longings which shall overcome the old! O that my Lord had His due of you—then you would not doubt Him! Blessed Savior, King of kings, and Lord of lords deigning to stoop to suffer and to die, how can men doubt You? How can they look into Your dear face, and yet distrust You? How can they see Your blessed hands, and feet, and riven side, and yet suspect You? O sinner, cast yourself on Jesus, and you shall have joy and peace given you today!

Three things I want you to notice in the text, and I have done. That which saves us is not what *is*, but what *will* be. "*I will make darkness light.*" "*I will make crooked things straight.*" The crooked thing is really crooked now, but there is a transformation in store; sinner, it is not what you are *now* that is to be your salvation; you are dark and crooked, but your salvation shall yet be *given* to you. You shall be light in the Lord, and upright through His grace.

Note secondly, it is not what *you* can do, but what *God* can do. "*I will make darkness light.*" The sinner shall not turn his darkness into light, but "*I,*" Jehovah, I who can do all things; I, who can create and can destroy, "*I will make darkness light before you, and crooked things straight.*"

Notice again that this work may not be yours at once, but it shall be soon. It does not say, "*I will make darkness light today.*" Still it does say, "*I will.*" Ah, then, let us look forward to the brightness which we cannot yet see, and rejoice in the straightness which as yet we do not discern! God will keep His word to the minute, and His eternal "shalls" and "wills" shall never fall to the ground!

I pray God will bless the word to you who are tried believers, to give you peace and confidence; and to you who are seeking sinners, that you may trust in Christ, and find salvation. The Lord bless you richly, for His name's sake. Amen.

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