

THE CHRIST OF PATMOS

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A SERMON
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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.”
Revelation 1:12-17

THE Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Having neither beginning of days, nor end of years, He is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. But the views which His people have of Him are extremely varied. According to our progress in grace, will be the standpoint from which we view the Savior, and according to the position from which we look at Him, will be what we see of Him. Christ is the same, but believers do not all see Him in the same clear light, nor do they all approach to the same nearness of fellowship.

Some only know His offices, others only admire His character, far fewer commune with His person. But there be some who have advanced still further, who have come to feel the unity of all the church with the person of Christ Jesus their Lord. Under the Old Testament, the lesson to be taught was the same, but the capacity of the learners differed, and hence the mode of teaching the lesson differed also.

A poor man, under the Jewish dispensation, was the type of an uninstructed Christian, the rich man was the picture of the well-taught believer. Now, the poor Jew brought a turtle dove or two young pigeons (Lev 1:14-17). The necks of these were wrung and they were offered. The poor man in that was only taught this lesson, that it was only by death and blood that his sin could be put away.

The richer Israelite who had it within his power brought a bullock (Lev 1:3-9). This bullock was not only slain, but it had to be cut in pieces. The legs, the fat, the innards were washed in water, and all these were laid in special order upon the altar, to teach him, even as Christ now teaches the intelligent and instructed believer, that there is within the mere act of bloodshedding an order and a fullness of wisdom which only advanced believers can perceive.

The scapegoat taught one truth, the paschal lamb another. The showbread set forth one lesson, the lighting of the lamps another. All the types were intended to teach the one great mystery of Christ manifest in the flesh and seen of angels. But they taught it in different ways, because men in those times, as now, had different capacities and could only learn by little at a time.

As it was under the Old Testament, it is under the New. All Christians know Christ, but they do not all know Him to the same degree and in the same way. There are some believers who view Christ as *Simeon* did. *Simeon* saw Him as a babe. He took Him up in his arms, and was so overjoyed, that he said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.”

You know how, in the Church of England, that Song of *Simeon* is chanted every Sabbath-day, as if it were true that many of the worshippers had never gotten further than that, to know Christ as a babe, a Savior whom they could take up in their arms, whom they could apprehend by faith and call their own.

There is an advance, however, upon that experience when not only can we take Christ up, but we can see Christ taking us up. When we can see not only how *we* apprehend Him by faith, but how *He* apprehended us of old in the eternal covenant, and took up the seed of Abraham, and was made in their likeness, that He might redeem their souls.

It is a great joy to know Christ, though it be but only as the infant consolation of Israel. It is a happy privilege to be permitted with the Easterns to bring our gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and worship Christ, the newborn King. This, however, is but a lesson for beginners. It is one of the first syllables of the schoolbook of grace. To take Christ up in our arms is the sure pledge of salvation—at the same time it is but the dawn of heavenly light in experience.

But my dear brethren, the *disciples* of Jesus knew Christ in a higher degree than Simeon, for they regarded Him not simply as the Incarnate One, but as their Prophet and Teacher. They sat at His feet, they heard His words, they knew that never man spake like that man. Under His teaching, they were led on to high degrees of knowledge. He gave to them the divine texts from which, when the Spirit had descended, they drew sacred lessons which they taught to the multitude.

They knew more, I say, of Christ than Simeon—Simeon knew Him as One whom he could take hold of by faith, and who would make glad his eyes, but the disciples knew Him as One who taught them, not merely saved them, but instructed them. There are hundreds of believers who have got as far as this. Christ is to them the great teacher of doctrine, He is the great expositor of God's will and law, and they look up to Him with reverence as the Rabbi of their faith.

Ay! but there was one of the disciples at least who knew Jesus Christ even better than this. There was one chosen out of the twelve, as the twelve had been chosen out of the rest, who knew Christ as a *dear companion* and as a sweet friend. There was one who knew His bosom as affording a pillow for his weary head, one who had felt His heart beat close to his cheek, one who had been with Him on the mountain of transfiguration, and had enjoyed fellowship with the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ.

Now I fear that those who advance as far as John did are not very many. They are doctrinal Christians, and thus they have made an advance upon those who are only trusting Christians and not more. But John had taken a wonderful stride before his fellow men, when he could claim Christ as being dear to him, the companion of his life, the friend of his days. May the Lord teach each of us more and more how to walk with Jesus and to know His love!

But brethren, there was one who comprehended Christ Jesus fully as well as the beloved disciple. 'Twas *Mary*. She knew Him as One who had been born in her and born of her. Blessed is that Christian who can say that Christ is formed *in him*, the hope of glory, and who has come to look not at Christ as only on the cross, but as Christ in his own soul, who knows that he himself as truly bears the Savior within him as ever did his Virgin Mother—who feels that in him, too, by the Holy Ghost, Christ is conceived—that in him the nature of Christ, that holy thing which is born of the Holy Spirit, is ripening and maturing till it shall destroy the old man, and in perfect manhood shall be born into eternal life.

This, I say, even eclipses John's knowledge, but it is not perhaps the highest of all. Further than this we will not venture this morning, but at some other time, when our eyes are more enlightened, we may take a glimpse of a yet more excellent glory.

Dear friends, you who love the Savior, wish for nothing so much as to see more and more of Him. Your desire is that you may see Him *as He is*, yet I can well-conceive, if you might indulge your wishes, you would wish that you had seen Him as He was *transfigured*. Do you not look back almost with envy upon those three favored ones who went up to the top of Tabor, and were there o'ershadowed when His garment became whiter than any fuller could make it, and there appeared unto Him Moses and Elijah talking with Him? You need not envy, for you know how they were overpowered with the sight, and "were heavy with sleep." You, too, would sleep if you had but the same strength as they, and had to gaze upon the same surpassing glory.

I know, too, you have wished that you could have seen Him in the garden of *Gethsemane*. Oh! to have seen that agony, to have heard those groans, to have marked that bloody sweat as it fell in clots to

the frozen ground! Well might you envy those who were chosen to keep the sacred vigil and to have watched with Him one hour.

But you will remember that they slept. “He found them sleeping for sorrow.” With your powers of endurance, if you had no more than they, you, too, would sleep, for as in the transfiguration, so in that agony and bloody sweat, there was a sight which eye can never see, because there was a glory and a shame which man can never comprehend.

But peradventure some of you have longed and wished that you had seen Him on the cross. Oh! to have beheld Him there, to have seen those hands nailed “to fix the world’s salvation fast,” and those feet fast to the wood as though He tarried to be gracious, though the world waited long in coming. Oh! to have seen that mangled naked body and that pierced side! John, you who did see and bear witness, we might well envy you!

But oh! my brethren, why should we? why should we? For have we not seen by faith all the sufferings of Christ, without that horror which must have passed over the beholders, and which did pass over His mother when a sword also pierced through her own heart also, because she saw her Son bleeding on the tree.

Oh! how delightful it must have been to have beheld the Savior on the morning of the resurrection!—to have seen Him as He rose with new life from the chambers of the dead, to have beheld Him when He stood in the midst of the disciples, the doors being shut and said, “Peace be unto you!” How pleasant to have gone to the top of the mountain with Him, and to have seen Him as He ascended, blessing His disciples, a cloud receiving Him out of their sight! Surely we might well-desire to spend an eternity in visions like these.

But permit me to say that I think the picture of our text is preferable to any, and if you have desires after those I have already mentioned, you ought to have far more intense longings to see Christ as John did in this vision, for this is, perhaps, the most complete, the most wonderful, and at the same time, most important manifestation of Christ, that was ever seen by human eye.

There will be two things which will take our attention this morning. The first briefly, namely, *the importance of this vision to us*, and then, secondly, *the meaning of the vision*.

I. THE VALUE OF THIS VISION TO US.

Some may be inclined to say, “The preacher has selected a very curious passage of Scripture, one that may tickle our fancy, but that can be of no spiritual benefit to us.” My friends, you labor under a very great mistake, and I trust I may convince you of that in a minute or two. Remember that this representation, this symbolic picture of Christ, is a representation of *the same Christ who suffered for our sins*.

Strangely diverse as it may seem to be, yet here we have the very same Christ. John calls Him the Son of man, that sweet and humble name by which Jesus was so wont to describe Himself. That He was the same identical person is very clear, because John speaks of Him at once as being *like* unto the Son of man, and I think he means that he perceived in His majesty a likeness to Him whom he had known in His shame. There was not the thorn-crown, but he knew the brow. There was not the mark of the wounds, perhaps the seven stars had taken the position of the prints of the nails, but he knew the hand for all that.

As in our new bodies, when we rise from the tomb, we shall no doubt know each other, though the body which shall rise will have but faint resemblance to that which is sown in the tomb, for it will be a miraculous and marvelous development in flower of the poor withered thing that is but the buried seed. As I doubt not that I shall be able to recognize your visage in heaven, because I knew your countenance on earth, so did John discover, despite the glories of Christ, the identical person whom he had seen in abasement and woe.

Christian, look with reverence there. There is your Lord, the Christ of the manger, the Christ of the wilderness, the Christ of Capernaum and Bethsaida, the Christ of Gethsemane, the Christ of Golgotha is there, and it cannot be unimportant for you to turn aside to see this great sight.

Further, this picture represents to us *what Christ is now*, and hence, its extreme value. What He was when He was here on earth is all-important to me, but what He is now is quite as much a matter of vital consequence. Some set exceeding great store by what He *shall be* when He comes to judge the earth in righteousness, and so do we.

But we really think that Christ in the future is not to be preferred to a knowledge of Christ in the present, for we want to know today, in the midst of present strife, and present pain, and present conflict, what Jesus Christ is *now*. And this becomes all the more cheering, because we know that what He is now we shall be, for we shall be like Him when we shall see Him as He is.

And yet a third consideration lends importance to the topic of our text, namely, that Christ in the text is represented as *what He is to the churches*. You will perceive He is portrayed as standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks, by which we understand the churches. We love to know what He is to the nations, what He is to His peculiar people—the Jews, what He will be to His enemies.

But it is best for us, as members of Christian churches, to know what He is in the churches, so that every deacon, elder, and church member here should give earnest heed to this passage, for he has here pictured to him that Christ to whom the church looks up as her great Lord and hope, that Messiah whom every day she serves and adores.

And I might add yet once more, I think the subject of our text is valuable when we consider *what an effect it would have upon us if we really felt and understood it*. We should fall at His feet as dead. Blessed position! Does the death alarm you? We are never so much alive as when we are dead at His feet. We are never so truly living as when the creature dies away in the presence of the all-glorious King.

I know this, that the death of all that is sinful in me is my soul's highest ambition, ay, and the death of all that is carnal and all that savors of the old Adam. Would that it would die. And where can it die but at the feet of Him who has the new life, and who by manifesting Himself in all His glory is to purge away our dross and sin? I only would that this morning I had enough of the Spirit's might so to set forth my Master that I might contribute even in a humble measure to make you fall at His feet as dead, that He might be in us our All in All.

II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS VISION?

“Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” If God manifest in a bush commands solemnity, what shall we say of God manifest in Christ, and manifest too, after the most marvelous manner? The words of our text are symbols, they are not to be understood literally. Of course, Christ does not appear in heaven under this literal form, but this is the appearance under which He was set forth to the intellect of John.

John was not so benighted as to understand any of this literally. He knew that the candlesticks were not meant for candlesticks, but for the seven light-giving churches. He knew that the stars were not stars, but ministers. And he understood right well that all the whole description through, it was the symbol and the spirit of the vision he was to look to, and not to the literal words.

But to begin, “*And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*” We have here, then, first, in Christ as He is today, a picture of His official dignity and of His royal honors.

Clothed with a garment down to the feet. This was the robe constantly worn by kings, the garment which descended, and left only the feet apparent. This was also the peculiar dress of the priest. A priest of the Jewish dispensation had the long flowing white robe which reached down to the ground and covered him entirely. Christ, then, in being thus clothed, asserts His kingship and His eternal priesthood.

It may indicate the fact, too, that He has clothed Himself with righteousness. Though He was once naked, when He was the substitute for naked sinners who had cast away the robe of their righteousness, He is naked now no more, He wears that garment dipped in His own blood, woven from the top throughout, by His own hands—He wears Himself that garment which He casts over the whole church, which is His body.

However, the main idea here is that of official dignity and position. And when you read of the golden girdle which was about the paps, it is a representation of how the high priest was girt. He was girt with a girdle that had gold in it. The girdles of the other priests were not of gold, but that of the high priest's was mainly made of that precious metal.

And it was girt about the paps, not at the waist, but across the breast, as if to show that the love of Christ, or the place where His loving heart beat most, was just the spot where He bound firmly about Himself the garments of His official dignity. As if His love was the faithful girdle of His loins, as if the affection of His heart ever kept Him fast and firm to the carrying out of all the offices which He had undertaken for us.

The picture is not difficult to imagine before your eyes. I only want the Christian mind to stop a minute and consider it. Come, believer, you have a Lord to worship who is clothed today with office. Come before Him, He can govern for you, He is King. He can plead for you, He is Priest. Come, worship HIM, HE is adored in heaven. Come, trust Him.

Lo, at that golden girdle hang the keys of heaven, and death, and hell. No more despised and rejected of men, no more naked to His shame, no more houseless, homeless, friendless. His royal dignity ensures the obedience of angels, and His priestly merit wins the acceptance of His Father.

***“Give Him, my soul, thy cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father’s grace.”***

Let His garment and His robe compel your faith to trust your soul, ay, and your temporal affairs too, wholly and entirely in His prevailing hands.

You will perceive that there is no crown upon the head as yet, that crown is reserved for His advent. He comes soon to reign, even now He is King, but He is a king rather with the girdle about His loins than with the crown upon His head. Soon He shall come in the clouds of heaven, and His people shall go forth to meet Him, and then shall we see Him “with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.”

Our soul longs and watches for the day when the many crowns shall be upon His head. Yet even now, is He King of kings and Lord of lords. Even now is He the High Priest of our profession, and as such we adore and trust Him.

“His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow.” When the church described Him in the Canticles, she said, “His locks are bushy and black as a raven’s.” How are we to understand this apparent discrepancy? My brethren, the church in the Canticles looked forward, she looked forward to days and ages that were to come, and she perceived *His perpetual youth*. She pictured Him as one who would never grow old, whose hair would ever have the blackness of youth. And do we not bless God that her view of Him was true? We can say of Jesus, “Thou hast the dew of thy youth.”

But the church of today looks backward to His work as complete. We see Him now as the Ancient of eternal days. We believe that He is not the Christ of eighteen hundred years ago merely, but before the daystar knew its place, He was one with the Eternal Father. When we see in the picture His head and His hair white as snow, we understand the antiquity of His reign. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

When all these things were not, when the old mountains had not lifted their hoary heads into the clouds, when the yet more hoary sea had never roared in tempest, ere the lamps of heaven had been lit, when God dwelt alone in His immensity, and the un navigated waves of ether, if there were such, had never been fanned by the wings of the seraph, and the solemnity of silence had never been startled by the song of cherubim, Jesus was of old in eternity with God.

We know how He was despised, and rejected of men, but we understand, too, what He meant when He said, “Before Abraham was, I am.” We know how He who died, when but a little more than thirty

years of age, was verily the Father of the everlasting ages, having neither beginning of days nor end of years.

No doubt there is here coupled with the idea of antiquity, that of reverence. Men rise up before the hoary head and pay it homage—and do not angels, principalities, and powers bow before Him? Though He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, yet is He not crowned with glory and honor? Do they not all delight to obey His behests, and lay their borrowed dignities at His feet?

O Christian! rejoice that you serve one so venerable, so worthy to be praised. Let your soul join now in the song which rolls upward to His throne, “Unto him that is, and that was, and that is to come, the Alpha and the Omega, unto him be glory, and honour, and dominion, and power, for ever and ever. Amen.”

“*His eyes were as a flame of fire.*” This represents Christ’s oversight of His church. As He is in the church, the Ancient of Eternal Days, her Everlasting Father, and her Head to be revered, so is He in the church, the Universal Overseer, the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls. And what eyes He has! How penetrating! “Like flames of fire.” How discriminating! “Like flames of fire,” which melt the dross and only leave the real metal. “Like flames of fire,” He sees not by light without, but His own eyes supply the light with which He sees.

His knowledge of the church is not derived from the churches prayers, nor from her experience of her wants, nor from her verbal statements. He sees by no borrowed light of the sun or of the moon. His eyes are lamps unto themselves. In the church’s thick darkness, when she is trampled down, when no light shines upon her, He sees her, for His eyes are “like flames of fire.”

Oh! what sweet consolation this must be to a child of God. If you cannot tell your Lord where you are, He can see you, and though you cannot tell what you really want, or how to pray, yet He can not only see, but He can see with such discrimination that He can tell precisely what your true wants are and what are only fancies of an unsanctified desire.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire.” Why, you are in darkness and you see no light, but He is the light that lights every man that comes into the world, and He sees by the light of His own person all that goes on in you. I love that doctrine of Christ’s universal oversight of all His church. You know there is an idea sometimes held out that the church ought to have a visible head, that so all matters may come by degrees through a hierarchy to some one man, that so one man knowing all things, may be able to guide the church aright.

An absurd, because impossible idea. What man could possibly say, “I keep the church. I water it, I watch it every moment.” No, no, it must be this, “*I the LORD* do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” There is ne’er a trial to the church, there is ne’er a pang she feels, but those eyes of fire discern.

Oh! think not you would rather view the eyes that once were fountains of tears. They wept for your sins, those sins are put away. It is better for you now that you should have one whose eyes are like flames of fire, not to perceive your sins, but to burn them up, not merely to see your wants, but forever to fulfill your desires. Bow before Him, lay bare your heart, hope not to conceal anything. Think it not needful that you should explain aught, He sees and He knows, for His eyes are like a flame of fire.

“*And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.*” The head, you see, is reverent, the feet are blazing, the countenance is like the sun for glory, the feet like burning brass for trial. I think we may understand by this the church of God on earth—those saints united to Christ who are the last of the body—the lower part who are in these times still treading the earth. Christ is in heaven, His head is like “the sun that shineth in his strength.” Christ is on earth in the midst of His church, and where His feet walk among the golden candlesticks, they walk in fire. They are like brass that burns in a furnace.

Now, we think that wherever Christ is, there will be the fire of trial to His church. I would never believe that we were on the Lord’s side if all *men* were on our side. If the words we speak were not constantly misrepresented, we could not imagine we spoke the words of God. If we were always understood, we should think that we spoke not those things which the carnal mind cannot receive.

Nay, brethren, nay, expect not ease! Expect not that you shall attain to the crown without suffering. The feet of Christ burn in the furnace, and you belong to His body—you do not belong to His head, for you are not in heaven. You do not belong to His loins, for you wear not the golden girdle—but you belong to His feet, and you *must* burn in the furnace.

What a wondrous picture is this of Christ! Can you conceive it? You know that the robe came down even to His feet. Perhaps it covered them, but yet the glowing heat was such that through the robe might be seen the burning of the feet of brass. They were fine brass, too. They were metal that could not be consumed, a metal that would not yield to the heat.

And so is Christ's church. The old motto of the early Protestants was an anvil, because "The church," said they, "is an anvil that has broken many hammers." The evil one smites her, she does not reply, except by bearing, and in that enduring with patience is her kingdom. In that suffering is her victory. In the patient possessing of her soul, in her glowing in the furnace, and not yielding to the fire, in her shining and being purified by its heat, and not giving way and being molten by its fury, in that is as greatly the triumph of Christ, as in that bright countenance which is as "the sun shining in his strength."

I rejoice in this part of my text. It comforts one's soul when cast down and deeply tried. "His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Let us say to our souls—

*"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease;
While others fought to win the prize,
And sail'd through bloody seas?"*

*"No, I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word."*

But I must pass on having no time this morning to dwell long on any one of these points. "*His voice as the sound of many waters.*" And what is the voice of Christ? It is a voice which is heard in heaven. You angels, bow before Him! They hear the command—"And at the name of Jesus every knee doth bow of things in heaven." It is a voice that is heard in hell. You fiends, be still! "Vex not mine anointed: do my prophets no harm." And there those hell hounds champ their chains, longing to escape from their imprisonment.

It is a voice that is heard on earth too. Wherever Christ is preached, wherever His cross is lifted up, there is there a voice that speaks better things than the blood of Abel. Sometimes we are apt to think that Christ's voice is not heard. We His ministers are such feeble creatures. If we have some few thousands to listen to our voice, yet how many forget! Amidst the storm of the battle cry, amidst political clamors, who can hope that the still small voice of the ministry should be heard?

But it *is* heard. Across the Alleghenies, the voice of God's minister echoes. No evil thing shall in the end stand against the protests of God's servants. That which has made slavery tremble to its very soul, has been the constant protest of Christian ministers in England. And though the lying prophets of the Southern States have sought to undo the good, yet must they fall before the force of truth.

There is not a humble village pastor, standing in his pulpit to edify his feeble flock, who is not thereby exerting an influence on all generations yet to come. The minister of Christ stands in the midst of the telegraphic system of the universe, and works it according to JEHOVAH's will. All society is but a tremulous mass of jelly yielding to the influence of Christ's Gospel.

I say not, sirs, that there is any power in us, but there is power in Christ's Word when it peals through us in trumpet tones. There is power in Christ's Word to waken the dry bones that lie in full many a valley. China shall hear. India must listen. The gods of the heathen, though they hear not, yet

tremble. And feeble though we be in ourselves, yet does God make us mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, and He shall make us conquerors through His grace.

If you could stand upon some exceedingly high mountain and could be gifted with enlarged powers of vision, it would be a wonderful thing to be able to see the Atlantic and Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and all the seas of the world at once.

The supposition of course could never be carried out, but if we could imagine a wide extended plain, suppose we are standing on the loftiest summit while a tremendous storm sweeps o'er the whole. The sea roars and the fullness thereof—yea, all the seas roar at once—the Atlantic echoes to the Pacific, the Pacific passes on the strain to the great Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean cries to the Red Sea, the Red Sea shouts aloud to the Arctic, and the Arctic to the Antarctic. They clap their hands and all at once there is a voice of many waters.

Such is the voice of Christ's ministry on earth. It may seem to be feeble, but it never is. There may be but a handful of men, they may be in the glens of Piedmont, they may be found upon the hills of Switzerland, and they may be dying for Christ. But their tramp is the tramp of heroes, their voice shakes the ages, and eternity itself trembles before it. Oh! how consolatory to the heir of heaven and to the minister of Christ is the fact that *His* voice is as "the sound of many waters."

"*And he had in his right hand seven stars.*" The church should always see Christ as holding up her ministers. Ministers are very much in danger. Stars, or those things that seem to be stars, may be but shooting stars. They may be but meteors and flash awhile, right soon to melt away. But the ministers of Christ, though they be in danger, yet, if they be Christ's ministers, are perfectly safe. He keeps the seven stars. The celestial Pleiades of the Gospel are always in Christ's hand. And who can pluck them thence?

Church of God! Be it ever your prayer that Christ would keep His ministers wherever they are. Commend them to Him, and remember you have this as a kind of promise on which to ground your prayer. Brethren, pray for us! We are but like twinkling stars at least, and He is as the sun that shines in his strength.

Ask Him to give us light, ask Him to keep us ever burning, ask Him that we may be as the pole-star guiding the slave to liberty. Ask Him that we may be as the stars that make the southern cross, that when the mariner sees us, stars of Christ, he may see not each star individually, but Christ manifested in beauteous form in the shinings of all combined.

This shall be my portion today. "The seven stars were in his right hand." How many would like to quench the light of God's ministers! Many criticize, some abuse, more still misrepresent. I can scarcely say a sentence in which I am not misconstrued, and I do aver that I have often taken Cobbett's rule to speak not only so that I could be understood, but so that I thought I could not be misunderstood. And yet I am. But what matters it? What signifies it? Still if the stars make not glad the eyes of men, if they be in the Lord's hand they ought to be satisfied. They should rest content and not trouble themselves.

Loud let the waves roar, and let the envious sea send up her boisterous billows to quench the heavenly fires. Aha, O sea! upon your tranquil couches sleep the stars. They look down upon your boisterous waves, and when you shall subside in calm, and the clouds that have risen from your vapor have passed away, be it the lone star or one of a constellation, it shall shine out yet again, and smile on your placid waters, till you, O ocean, shall mirror the image of that star, and you shall know that there is an influence, even in that envied spark, which you have sought to quench, to lead your floods, and make them ebb, and make them flow, so that you shall be servant to one whom you thought to put out forever. The seven stars are in Christ's right hand.

I shall not detain you much longer, but we must finish this wonderful description. "*Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*" I have looked at one or two old pictures in which the artists of the olden time have tried to sketch this vision. I think it a most ridiculous thing to attempt. I conceive that this was never meant to be painted by any human being, nor can it be.

But one old artist seems to have caught the very idea. He represents the breath of Christ in vapor, assuming the form of a two-edged sword, very mighty, and strong to cut in pieces His adversary. Now,

as the Gospel of Christ must be *heard*, because it is “the voice of many waters,” so it must be *felt*, for it is “a two-edged sword,” and it is surprising how the Gospel really is felt, too.

It is felt by those who hate it, they writhe under it. They cannot sleep after it. They feel indignant, they are horrified, they are disgusted, and all that, but still there is a something within which does not let them remain quiet. That two-edged sword gets at the marrow of their bones. They wish they had never heard the Word, though they can never heal themselves of the wound they have gotten by it.

And to those who are blessed under the Word—what a two-edged sword it is to them! how it kills their self-righteousness! how it cuts the throat of their sins! how it lays their lusts dead at the feet of Jesus! how all-subduing is it in the soul! No sword of Gideon was ever so potent against a horde of Midianites, as the sword that comes out of Jesus’ lips against the hosts of our sins.

When the Spirit of God comes in all His power into our souls, what death He works, and yet, what life!—what death to sin and yet what new life in righteousness! O holy sword! O breath of Christ! enter into our hearts and kill You our sins.

It is delightful to see each day how the preaching of the Word is really the sword of God. I do sometimes retire from the pulpit sorrowing exceedingly, because I cannot preach as I would, and I think that surely the Master’s message has had no speed among you. But it is perfectly marvelous how many here have been called by grace.

I am each day more and more astonished when I see high and low, rich and poor, nobles and peasants, moral and immoral alike, subdued before this conquering sword of Christ. I must tell it to the Master’s honor, to the Master’s glory, “His own right hand hath gotten him the victory,” and here the slain of the Lord have been many. Here has He glorified Himself in the conversion of multitudes of souls.

But to conclude. “*His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*” How can I picture this? Go abroad and fix your eye upon the sun if you can. Select the day of the year in which he is most in the zenith, and then fix your steady gaze upon him. Does it not blind you, are you not overwhelmed? But mark, when you can gaze at that sun with undimmed eye, you shall even then have no power to look upon the countenance of Christ.

What glory, what majesty, what light, what spotlessness, what strength! “His countenance is as the sun that shineth in his strength.” Well may the angels veil their faces with their wings, well may the elders offer vials full of odors sweet, that the smoke of their incense may be a medium through which they may see *His* face. And well may you and I feel and say, that

*“The more His glories strike our eyes,
The humbler we must lie.”*

But Jesus, turn Your face and look You on us. ’Tis midnight, but if You turn Your face, it must be noon, for Your face is as the sun. Thick darkness and long nights have overwhelmed our spirits, and we have said, “I am shut out from the Lord for ever!” Jesu! Turn Your face and we are troubled no more. You sea of love, where all our passions roll, You circle, where all our joys revolve. You center of our souls—shine You and make us glad.

This sun, if we look at it curiously to understand its glory, may blind us, but if we look at it humbly, that we may receive its light, it will make our eyes stronger than they were, and shed sunlight into the thickest darkness of our despair.

Oh, church of God! What say you to Him who is your Husband? Will you not forsake your own kindred and your father’s house? Will you not long to know Him more and more, and shall it not be your cry today, “Mount Your chariot, Jesu! Mount Your chariot! Ride forth, conquering and to conquer! Show Your face and the darkness of superstition must melt before Your countenance. Open Your mouth and let the two-edged sword of Your Spirit slay Your foes!

“Come forth, Jesus. Bear the seven stars and let them shine where light was never been before! Speak, Jesus, speak! And men will hear You, for Your voice is as ‘the sound of many waters.’ Come, Jesus come, even though You bring the burning heat with You, and we as Your feet glow in the furnace! Come, look on us and burn up all our sins with those eyes of fire!

“Come, show Yourself and we will adore You, ‘for thy head and thy hair are white like wool!’ Come, manifest Yourself, and we will trust You, with Your garment, Your priestly garment, we will reverence You, and with Your golden girdle we will adore You, King of kings and Lord of lords!

“Come then, that we may see You, that You may put the crown upon Your head, and the shout may be heard—‘Hallelujah! hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!’”

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.