

THE ENTRANCE OF LIGHT

Preached on Lord's Day morning, July 11, 1841, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, Whitechapel

"The entrance of they words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Psalm 119:130

There is a very striking analogy between the first or natural creation, when God first spoke this world into being, and the second or supernatural creation, when he calls his elect into a new and spiritual existence. We find the apostle Paul clearly alluding to this analogy (2 Cor. 4:6): "God, **who commanded the light to shine out of darkness**, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We are warranted, then, by apostolic authority, to say that there is a resemblance, and no doubt an intended resemblance, between the natural creation and the spiritual creation. But what was this earth, before the Lord reduced it into beauty and order? **for we are not to lose sight of this fact, that the earth existed before "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."** "It was without form and void," or more literally, "emptiness and desolation;" a rude undigested chaos; a mass of confusion, where there was nothing that manifested beauty or comeliness. Thus it is spiritually. The soul exists before it is brought into an experimental acquaintance with God. But it exists as this world existed, before the all-creative fiat went forth from the lips of the most high—in ruins, where all is emptiness and desolation, a rude chaos, where there is no beauty nor comeliness but "a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness" (Job 10:22). We read in Prov. 8:25-31, that, even before this world was reduced into beauty and order the heart and

affections of the Son of God were fixed upon his people, for under the name of Wisdom he thus speaks: "While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, I was then by him as one brought up with him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." And thus, spiritually, even when the elect are in ruins before God, in their natural state of emptiness and desolation, there is a love which the Son of God bears unto them, as members of his body. The vessel of mercy is "preserved in Christ," until the season to favour it comes. It lies as Lazarus in the grave, waiting the all-creative energy of the Son of God to bring it "out of darkness into marvellous light," and out of the sleep of death into a new and spiritual life. But what do we read was the first act of creative energy, when the earth lay outstretched a rude chaos? "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The expression "moved," implies rather such an act as a bird performs when she covers her brood. It is the same word that is translated in Deut. 32:11, "fluttereth"—"As an eagle **fluttereth** over her young;" implying a tremulous movement, a thrilling of maternal affection, as well as a spreading of her wings as widely as possible, so as to communicate warmth to the brood which she is covering. Thus, when "the Spirit of God" is said to have "moved upon the face of the waters," it implies, that he covered it, as it were, with outstretched wings, that he communicated warmth and life and energy out of himself to it, that he fluttered over it with the affection that a bird bears to her young, when she broods over them in order to bring them forth into life out of the egg, and then to foster them with all her maternal warmth. Thus does the Spirit of the Lord brood over the hearts of God's elect, when he quickens them into spiritual life, and as he, full of love and power, flutters over them, he breathes into them life out of the fulness of Jesus, so as to communicate to their dead souls the life of God. And

as a simultaneous act, God said, "Let there be light: and there was light." When God spake the word, light came at his almighty fiat that best and brightest fruit of the six days' work burst forth upon a dark world. But when this blessed effect of creative power—the material resemblance of that eternal and ineffable light in which Jehovah dwells—when this material, created light burst forth into existence, what did it disclose? Beauty, order, comeliness? No. These natural types of supernatural beauty, these visible and earthly shadowings forth of invisible and eternal perfections, did not then exist. All upon earth that the newborn light looked upon and discovered was one rude mass, a wide-spread chaos of confusion. So, when the Lord speaks the word, and spiritual light beams into the dark soul out of Him in whom all fulness dwells, it discovers neither beauty, nor order, nor comeliness. Emptiness of all good, confusion as to anything God-like, disordered passions, depraved affections, perverted faculties, mountains tossed over valleys, and valleys sank amid mountains, everything a rude distorted mass, where nothing is in its place, but all one universal wreck and ruin—such are the scenes which spiritual light discovers. Thus, when "the entrance of God's words giveth light," when by his speaking home his own commandment with power and authority to the soul, the Spirit conveys light out of Christ's fulness, he reveals to a man what his is; he shows him something of his fallen condition; he opens up that state of utter ruin, in which he stands before God, without any one thing that can please him; he manifests to him that he is altogether lost, without hope, without help, without strength, without wisdom, without anything whereby he can gain the favour, or conciliate the pleasure of the Most High.

But "the entrance of the words of God giving light," runs through the whole experience of a child of God, from the first pang of spiritual conviction, to the last expiring hallelujah;

for all through his life will he need communications of life and light to his soul out of the fulness of Jesus. And therefore, in endeavouring to handle these words, and to open up their spiritual meaning, I shall not confine myself to the first work of grace upon the soul, but shall attempt to show how the truth contained in the text runs through the whole path of the Christian, and how he continually needs to have light communicated and breathed into him out of the fulness of his covenant Head.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." There is a certain character here spoken of, to whom "the entrance of God's words giveth light," and he is called by an expressiveterm, "**the simple.**" What gather we from that word? Does it mean to say, that the soul to which God gives light, is simple, naturally? that all in God's family are fools? that the very circumstance of their believing the doctrines of grace stamps them as having inbred folly in them? Such I know is the charge of the world. But it is not the charge which God the Holy Ghost has laid against the people of God. They are indeed fools in the world's estimation, and they are indeed fools in their own opinion; but "the simple" here signify those that are made such by a work of grace upon their hearts. The word "simple" means literally something which is not folded or twisted together. But owing to the treacherous and desperately deceitful heart of man, all, without exception, in a state of nature are the reverse of this. All their plots and contrivances for worldly profit or fleshly pleasure are tangled and complicated; and they are continually twisting together some thread or other of carnal policy. But when God the Holy Ghost begins the work of grace upon the souls of the elect, he proceeds **if I may use the expression** to untwist them. He takes hold of that rope which Satan and their own hearts have been twisting together for years, and he untwists it

throughout its whole length, so as to leave the strands not intertwined as before, but riven, separated, and torn from each other. The light that shines into the soul out of the fulness of Jesus discovers to a man the tortuousness, the crookedness, the complicated deceit and hypocrisy of which he is guilty. And he begins at the beginning, for the Spirit of God always makes thorough work; there is no compromising in his teaching, no huddling up of things together in his blessed operations. He commences at one end of the rope, and untwists it throughout from end to end. And when he has untwisted what our hearts are, with all their worldliness, with all their pride, with all their self-seeking, with all their hypocrisy, all their presumption, and all their baseness; when he has untwisted this complicated rope, he lays us out before the eye of God, with all the strands still writhing and curling, still retaining their crooked form, but no longer wreathed together into a solid mass of self-righteousness, nor "a cart-rope," with which "iniquity is drawn" (Isa. 5:18).

Now, it is this process of untwisting a man, which makes him "simple"—undoing that strong cable which his own heart and the devil have been working at together for years, to try and twist him into something to please and satisfy self, or gain the favour of God. A man, then, is made "simple," when the folds and rumples of his heart are shaken out, and he is brought to see and feel that God looks into him; that his eye penetrates into every recess of his bosom; that let him endeavour to wrap and fold himself up as he may, yet still the eye of God is continually piercing through "the changeable suits of apparel, the mantles and the whimples, the hoods and the veils;" and that there is not a thought in his heart, nor "a word in his tongue, but the Lord knoweth it altogether" (Ps. 139:4); nor "any creature that is not manifest in his sight, all things being naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom he has to do" (Heb. 4:13).

This character is aptly represented by Nathaniel. We read that "he was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile" (John 1:47). He had gone through this untwisting work in his soul. He had been under the fig-tree and whilst kneeling and praying there, the eye of God looked into him, and just as a flash of lightning runs, in a moment, through a coil of wire, so, when the eye of God looked into Nathaniel's soul, that instantaneous flash unravelled and untwisted the devices of his heart, made him a simple man before him—"an Israelite, indeed, in whom there was no guile."

This, then, is the character to whom "understanding is given," and to whom "the entrance of God's words giveth light." Being divinely dealt with, and being by a work of grace upon his soul made honest and sincere, he is without admitted artifice, without allowed hypocrisy, without indulged deceitfulness, without the encouraged aim to stretch himself beyond the stature that God has given him. I use the words "allowed" and "encouraged," because he has indeed every evil still in his heart, but not reigning and rampant; what he does, like Paul, he "allows not" (Rom. 7:15). **His humility is not counterfeit; he is no actor of a part; but "he is as he is," as people say; a four square man, upright and honest, single-eyed and sincere; and therefore he stands simple before God, and he stands simple before men.** The lord has shown him to himself in his true colours, has made him know himself; has experimentally taught and made him to feel that he is a poor, needy, naked, guilty, filthy wretch; that he is a complete mass of disease, corruption, and pollution; that by nature he is nothing and has nothing spiritually good; that there is no one thing in his heart that God can look upon with acceptance; but that he is a vile fallen creature, who must be saved, if saved at all, by sovereign grace. He that answers to this description is a

"simple" soul, and as such, is interested in this promise. Very different from the crafty professor of the present day, very different from the boasting Arminian, and the notional Calvinist! The character that I am describing, is "**An honest man, the noblest work of God**" for it is a true line taken **spiritually, though written by a carnal poet**, one who can say with David, "let integrity and uprightness preserve me" (Ps. 25:21); one whose heart is right before God, and who desires to walk before him in "simplicity and godly sincerity."

These characters have an interest in this declaration, that "the entrance of God's words" into their souls, "giveth light." And, in fact, it was the entrance of God's words into their souls, which stamped upon them that character. It was this very communication of life and light out of Christ's fulness, that made them "simple;" and then, being made "simple," they became interested in the promises that are made to "the simple."

1. "The entrance of God's words giveth light" as **to the character of Jehovah**. How little is God really known! What a day of awful mockery is the day in which we live! God is more insulted in this Christian country **so called**, than he is in lands altogether heathen. In heathen lands his name is not mentioned. They bow down there to stocks of wood and stone. The name of Jehovah is not taken there into profane lips. But in this so-called Christian land, he is insulted and mocked on every side. Would it not have been a greater sin under the Levitical dispensation, to have rushed into the temple and profaned the altar, as King Antiochus did when he offered swine's blood upon it, than to commit the same act upon a heathen altar, or profane the ancient mysteries of pagan worship? And is it not a greater profanation, a more daring insult and mockery of God, that his name should be

taken into thousands of hypocritical lips, that he should be approached by thousands of ungodly professors, that the glory due to him should be trampled upon by crowds of traitors and renegades who call themselves by his name, than for his name not to be mentioned at all? Jerusalem exceeded Sodom and Samaria, her sisters, in wickedness (Ezek. 16:48), because she sinned against greater light and privileges. And thus the awful mockery of the ever-blessed Jehovah, in this so-called Christian land, seems stamped, in my eyes, as a greater insult to his glory, than the idolatries of heathen nations. Oh, how little is he known! How little is he feared! How little is he worshipped, and how little is he revered and loved! Nor can he be known to any except he reveal himself. "Darkness covereth the earth" **the world lying dead in profanity**, "and gross darkness the people" **the people lying dead in profession**. Only those can know him to whom he is pleased to manifest himself, as he manifests himself not to the world. And wherever he manifests himself, he leaves the stamp of his presence; wherever he discovers himself in glory and majesty, he raises up a godly fear and trembling awe of his great name.

"The entrance of God's words, then, giveth light" to a man's conscience, and infuses life into a man's soul, as to the character of Jehovah, before whom he bows down in reverence and godly fear; and he learns, by spiritual teaching, what a pure, holy, righteous, just God he is. He learns by heavenly tuition that he abhors evil. He is taught by heavenly manifestations that he is not to be mocked. He learns; through the channel of powerful convictions, that he is to be approached only with godly reverence and trembling awe, as "a consuming fire." Such an "entrance of light," concerning the character of God, fills the soul with reverential trembling before him, and bows it down with deep prostration of spirit before the throne of his majesty. But the

same divine entrance of light into our consciences manifests our contrariety with that character of Jehovah, which is thus revealed to us. We learn things by their contrasts. We know darkness by the previous presence of light; we know light by the preceding experience of darkness. The contrast of the one with the other shows more clearly each. And thus it is with that acquaintance, which an awakened sinner gains by divine teaching with himself. He sees light in God's light. His own character is contrasted with the character of Jehovah. Purity is contrasted with impurity, holiness with uncleanness, righteousness with unrighteousness, justice with sin, the brightness of heavenly glory with the foul workings of corruption; the majesty, greatness, and spotless lustre of Jehovah, with the base abominations and loathsome obscenities of the creature. Thus we learn to know what we really are, and to feel it deeply, too, in our consciences by having some spiritual acquaintance with the character of God. And no man can know anything of the horrible nature of sin, of the black pollution that lurks in his bosom, of the awful condition of our most depraved, diseased nature—no man can know them so as to feel what they really are—no man can shrink, as it were, into the very depths of self-abasement on account of what he carries about with him, except him into whose heart light has come, into whose soul there has been an "Entrance of God's words," and into whose conscience the entrance of that word has communicated light as to who God is and light as to what he himself is naturally before Him.

The knowledge of sin, then, is no doctrine merely learned from the Bible. A spiritually taught man does not read the third chapter of Romans to learn from it that "he is guilty before God." He does not turn to the seventeenth Jeremiah, to learn that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and note it down in his pocket-book as

a certain doctrine which he has just found in God's word, an item of remembrance, a memorandum for a certain day of the month, lest it should slip his memory. But it is that which the Holy Ghost stamps inwardly upon his conscience. What that heavenly Teacher impresses there, is, so to speak, a counterpart of what is recorded in the word of God. Just as the printer's type stamps upon the paper, in a distinct and legible character, the exact letter that stands jutting out upon its face; just as the coin from the Mint is the precise image of the die, and the one is the counterpart of the other, "so the heart of a child of God, impressed by the Spirit of the Lord, presents the very counterpart to the stamp which the Holy Ghost brings down upon it. The word of God is the type that the Spirit uses to imprint truth on the heart—powerless in itself as the leaden letters in the compositor's case, but effective in his divine hand; and thus, when that heavenly Teacher writes his lesson of convictions in the conscience, the living soul is brought to groan and sigh, to lament and mourn as a polluted sinner before God, as a deeply infected wretch, a vile leper who has to stand "with his clothes rent, and his head bare, with a covering upon his upper lip, crying; Unclean, unclean" (Leviticus 13:45). It is "the entrance of Gods words into his conscience, which has given him light upon this inward leprosy. And he sees it, feels it, knows it, and sighs under it, just as palpably, just as visibly, just as evidently, and just as undeniably, as Miriam beheld herself "leprous, white as snow" (Num. 12:10); as King Uzziah felt the burning leprosy burst forth in his forehead (2 Chron. 26:19); and as the leper excluded from the camp, smarted under "the quick raw flesh" (Lev. 13:10), that festered and broke out in his body.

Corruption is not a mere doctrine in God's word, or like an article in the creed of a church, incorporated into its writings, and received by all its members. It is not merely assented to,

as a man may read over a doctrinal statement, and say, I agree to the doctrine of original sin," and subscribe his name, as the young men at the University subscribe to the thirty-nine articles. But it is a deep and abiding feeling, a spiritual and divine impression, seen in the light that the Spirit of God himself casts into the conscience. It is a felt disease. It is not like taking a medical book and reading therein the symptoms of consumption; but it is having the disease itself in our vitals. It is not like seeing a patient afflicted with a complaint, and with the learned one of a physician tracing out the symptoms, but it is suffering, labouring, gasping, and heaving under the malady, as developed in us. And that is the way that "the entrance of God's words giveth light—by teaching a man personally and individually, that he is everything by nature that the word of God declares him to be, and making him as certain of it, as though he had handled it with his hands, and seen it with his eyes.

2. But again: "the entrance of God's words giveth light," not only as to the disease and wretched malady which has infected all Adam's posterity, the elect together with the rest, but it also communicates light as to the remedy, we want the remedy, friends. A patient does not go to the hospital merely for the surgeon to handle his sores, or to be made an exhibition for the students to be lectured upon. But he goes there to be healed. Thus the Bible, in the hands of the Spirit as making use of the Bible to teach God's people, does not merely reveal the deep-seated disease which has infected the elect, together with the whole of Adam's race, but it discovers also that remedy, that blessed remedy, which God has provided in the Son of his love. The Scriptures are full of Jesus. They testify of his glory, they speak of his power; they proclaim his atoning blood; they reveal, all through the sacred page his glorious justifying righteousness. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" And therefore,

the whole word of God, from beginning to end, is one testimony of Jesus, as the Saviour of his people. But we want light to see it; we need life to feel it; we require power to believe it; we want application to enjoy it.

But "the entrance of God's words giveth light." The blessed Spirit is pleased sometimes to give some testimony concerning Jesus, to open up some passage of Scripture which speaks of Jesus, to cast a divine light before the astonished eyes, and to throw some of the blessed beams of gospel truth into our souls, whereby we see Jesus. We are brought sometimes in soul-feeling to the desires of those Greeks who came up to worship at the feast, and went to Philip, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21); and from some apprehension of his beauty and loveliness, we pour out our soul before God, and say, "We would see Jesus." We want to feel his love, to have our eyes anointed to behold his glory, to look upon him as crucified for us and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, that we may have a sweet and blessed fellowship with him as our suffering surety, and thus, by faith, enter into the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of his "that passeth knowledge." Wherever there is a work of grace upon the soul, there will be this pining after Christ. The soul that is really taught of God can never rest satisfied short of Jesus. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9), and they can never be satisfied short of that rest, which consists in an experimental knowledge of the Son of God, as revealed by the Holy Ghost to their souls. But before the enjoyment of this spiritual rest, there is often long delay; clouds of darkness for months and years together often envelope the mercy-seat; the cross of Christ cannot be seen; the Holy Ghost does not fulfil his covenanted office in taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the soul; and in the absence of these heavenly manifestations, we cannot

realise our interest in the things of salvation, nor can we feel our hearts sweetly composed and settled down in the blessed assurance, that when this life shall come to a close, we shall inhabit mansions prepared for us before the foundation of the world. When "with clouds he covereth the light, and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt" (Job 36:32), there are many doubts and fears and suspicions and surmises and jealousies whether we are not deceived and deluded altogether. At such seasons, everything seems to be against us, and to stamp us as being nothing but nominal professors.

It is in such dark and gloomy seasons as these that "the entrance of God's words giveth light." For instance, some such promise as this is made sweet to the soul: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). As that promise is brought home with power to the heart, and is shed abroad with some sweetness in the soul, it draws forth and strengthens faith, and the toiling pilgrim comes to the Lord, feeling himself "weary and heavy laden," and as he comes, he is indulged sometimes with a few sweet moments of rest. He is enabled to look out of fallen self, with all its miseries, and to look upon Jesus in his grace and beauty. He is favoured to cast himself simply, as he is, upon Jesus, and some sense of his atoning blood, dying love, and complete propitiation for sin is opened up to his heart. Faith springs up to lay hold of and embrace it, and he begins to taste the savour and sweetness and healing efficacy of a Saviour's blood and love. Thus "the entrance of God's words giveth light," and he feels by the divine coming in of what God has externally revealed, that inward light is shed abroad in the recesses of his soul, and he can, in some measure, realise the power of the cross of Jesus in his heart.

3. But we often get into such dark paths, that we seem altogether out of the secret, and feel as if there were no more grace in our souls, than in one altogether dead in trespasses and sins. And whether we look back at the past, or view the present, or turn our eyes to the future, one dark cloud seems to rest upon the whole; nor can we, with all our searching, find to our satisfaction that we have one spark of true religion, or one atom of grace, or one grain of vital godliness, or any trace that the Spirit of God has touched our consciences with his finger. Now, when we are in this dark, benighted state, we want light; we want the blessed Son of righteousness to arise; we want the south wind to blow a heavenly gale, and drive the mists away; we want the clouds to part, and the light of God's countenance to shine into our souls, so as to show us where we are, and what we are, and make it clear, that base and vile as we are, yet that we are interested in the love of the Father, the blood of the Son, and the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

Are you never there In soul-feeling? Do you not sometimes look into your hearts, and weigh up your evidences, and examine yourselves, and say, "I must honestly confess" **and you sink fathoms in a moment** "that I cannot find in my soul one mark of grace; I am as worldly, as stupid, as ignorant, and as carnal, as though the finger of God had never touched me." In these seasons, then, you want the entrance of light. You cannot run to a friend, and say, "Be so kind as to give me a little flattery. Do just take the whitewash brush, and brush me over; get out the mortar and trowel, and daub me over with a little plaster. Pray, put a little putty into these cracked evidences; shore up my sinking religion, that it may not be altogether" a tottering wall, and a bowed fence." No; you would rather ask a man of God to take his trowel, and pick out with the pointed end all the putty, instead of putting fresh into the crack. You would

rather stand naked before God, that he himself might, in his own time and way, clothe you with the garments of salvation, than be wrapped up in the veils and mantles of profession, or borrow a robe from your neighbour. Thus in these seasons you cannot go to man. You cannot angle for praise. If you resemble me, you cannot go to a child of God with a head hanging like a bulrush, and with demure looks throw out some disparaging, condemnatory sentence against yourself, for the express purpose of your Christian friend taking it up in order to underprop with it your religion. But you will act as Jeremiah says he did (Jer. 15:17), "I sat **alone**, because of thy hand;" you will do as we read (Lam. 3:28) he does who bears the yoke,— "he sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him." You will be crying unto the Lord in some secret corner, be tossing on your midnight couch, wrestling with the Saviour for a manifestation, and big scalding drops will be rolling down your cheeks, that the Lord would make himself known unto you, and sprinkle your conscience with his atoning blood. You will be sighing and mourning, away from every human eye and every human ear, that the Lord himself would lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and cause you experimentally to know the meaning of the words: The entrance of thy words giveth light." You can't be satisfied with **the doctrine** of Christ's blood, and **the doctrine** of Christ's righteousness, and **the doctrine** of God's everlasting love, but you want the feeling application of it; the spiritual and supernatural entrance of it into your souls, so as to raise up that in your hearts which shall bring you out of prison to praise and bless his name. And you want this entrance of light into your heart, that it may give you entrance into that which is within the veil, even a sweet and blessed entrance, by faith into the very heart and compassionate bosom of Jesus, so as to drink into his spirit, and to be melted into his likeness. This is the religion that I want; and as to any other,

I would, in my right mind, tear every shred of it from me. As to any religion that does not stand in divine teachings, sweet applications, blessed manifestations, and heavenly testimonies, I would throw it aside from me as an unclean garment—I would bury all such rags and tatters in the first dunghill that I came to.

Thus, "The entrance of God's words giveth light." And when his word begins to distil like the rain and to drop like the dew, when the Lord himself is pleased to speak home one sweet testimony, one little word, one kind intimation—what a change it makes! The clouds break away, the fog clears off, the mists dissolve, and the soul becomes sweetly persuaded of its interest in the blood and love of the Lamb.

The religion of God's people will always be utterly distinct from the religion of the professor. Their religion is a lo! here and lo! there, a running to and fro, with fleshly excitement, little else but bustle and noise, a work that the creature has to perform. This is their whole object. They have a weight to lift to the top of the house, and so they go to the crane, and work hard at the winch; though it often runs back, yet they keep toiling on; and when they have got the bale to the top of the warehouse, and seem just ready to bring it in at the window, it slips off the hook, and down it falls to the ground; but nothing discouraged, they begin again, until the end will be, if grace prevent not, that the bale of good works, which they are endeavouring to raise, will pull them down headlong with it into hell. But God's people, when rightly taught, want no such working at the winch. They want to lie passive, to do nothing, to be nothing. Their sweetest spot is that described in Isaiah (Isa. 64:8): "We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." They want to know nothing but what God teaches; to feel nothing but what God inspires; to have nothing but what God gives; and to be

nothing but what God makes them. So far as they are spiritually taught, and are living under divine influences, they desire to have no more will, or power, or strength, or wisdom, or righteousness, than the clay that lies on the potter's wheel; and the simple breathing of their heart is, to feel the potter's fingers working in them, moulding them, framing them into vessels of mercy; for they know if they can but have the potter's fingers in their soul, that he will make them all that he would have them to be.

4. But again: we often get into states and frames of mind, where we need something else besides consolation. A child would not grow, if it were always fed upon sweetmeats. It must have exercise, and be exposed to the weather, and have the cold winds blow upon its face, and be hardened, so as to enable it to bear the chill winter and the nipping frosts. So the child of God is not always petted, and fed upon love-tokens. He is not always carried to the warm bosom, or sucking the breasts of consolation, but he has to learn lessons to fit him to be a soldier. The soldier we know has to endure hardships. He has to lie all night upon the wet grass; to be pinched with hunger, parched with thirst, and nipped with cold; to make harassing marches; to hear the roar of the cannon and the whistling of the bullets, "the thunder of the captains and the shouting;" to see the flash of the sabre uplifted to cut him down, and the glitter of the bayonet at his breast, aye, and to feel painful and dangerous wounds. So with the spiritual soldier in God's camp. He has to hunger and thirst, to suffer cold, nakedness, and hard privations, to be shot at by the arrows of calumny and the fiery darts of Satan, to make harassing marches through an enemy's country, to suffer painful wounds, and by these very exercises to learn to be a soldier. Only so far as he is thus exercised spiritually can he learn the art of war, can he know how to fight and make effectual battle under the banners or

the Lord against the enemies of his salvation. As a parent, when his child is old and strong enough, often sends him away from home that he may push his way in the world, so does the Lord often put down his children from the lap on which he has dandled them, and thrusts them out of doors, that they may buffet with the storms of life. By being exposed to these hardships, a child of God begins to learn what that rich and sovereign grace is, of which he has had already a taste, but the fullness and sufficiency of which he has yet to experience; his eyes are more clearly opened to see the wondrous way of salvation through Jesus Christ; and he becomes initiated into, and inured to those paths of trial and difficulty, in which the Christian pilgrim must walk. After the Lord has blessed a soul with a taste of his goodness and mercy, he will often withdraw his comforts, and leave it, perhaps for weeks, months, and sometimes for years, to toil on in darkness and despondency, without dropping in any blessed testimony of his love. By these things the soul learns that the way to heaven is a rough and rugged road, encompassed with difficulties and beset with temptations, that it is no easy smooth path, but one that requires a vigorous traveller, one strengthened and upheld by the power and grace of God to hold on to the end. When he is in this path he wants light; and his secret cry is "Where am I? What am I? Am I a child of God? Am I in the way of eternal life!" Sometimes he can look back on the past, and then he says with Job: "O that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle" (Job 29:4, 5). And contrasting his former experience with his present, he says: "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him:

he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him" (Job 23:3; Job 23:8, 9). He is "full of confusion" (Job 10:15); he cannot tell where he is, having lost his way, and being embarrassed with the different state he is in now, from the time when "he washed his steps in butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil" (Job 29:6). He now wants some fresh, some peculiar entrance of light into his soul, to show him the path, and that he is in it, as well as to make plain to him the very spot in the road where he is. And when the Lord applies some such words as these: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known" (Isa. 42:16),—when these words are opened up by the Spirit, and power is communicated with them, faith is raised up to act upon them, light comes with them, and the soul sees where it really is, that God has been fulfilling his promise of "leading a poor, blind, ignorant, wayfaring fool by a way that he knew not."

5. Sometimes we get into a cold, carnal, careless, backsliding state, wherein there seems to be no more concern for the things of God and Christ, than if we had never had one spiritual feeling. The soul in this state seems altogether lost and buried in worldly business or the cares of this life, and as to real religion, though the form is preserved, yet there appears to be little else than the mere shell. It is as though all the flesh had dropped off the bones, and there were nothing left but the bare skeleton. In these seasons a man wants light from the entrance of God's word; and light he shall have. But what light will God give him? Not the light of his countenance, not the light of blessed manifestations or gracious discoveries of love. That would not do for him. He wants other remedies. He needs the rod, not the love-kiss. He wants stripes, not smiles, for "stripes are prepared for the back of fools" (Prov. 19:29); "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways;" and "whom the lord loveth he

chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). When the soul is in this state, the entrance of God's words giving light, shows us where we are, and where we have been, how carnal, how earthly, how covetous, how proud, how buried in the things of time and sense, how thinking, speaking, and acting, in a thousand instances, in a manner unbecoming one that fears God, how little separated in heart and spirit from those we have formerly condemned, how wrapped up in the folds of sensuality and sin, and how glued and fettered down to the perishing vanities of life. The entrance of life discovering to us our base backslidings, brings with it some deep and solemn pangs of guilt and condemnation. Jonah ran away from the presence of the Lord, and hoped to arrive safely at Tarshish. But what were his successive steps? he first fell asleep "in the sides **"hold"** of the ship," and next was tumbled headlong out of them into the belly of the whale, and there he found himself, in soul feeling, "in the belly of hell" (Jonah 2:2). There was but a short interval between his sleep in the ship and the "weeds being wrapped about his head." But he never came to himself till he got into the fish's belly. So in the moments of solemn recollection produced by the entrance of the sentence of reproof, we consider what we have been doing, where we have been, how we have backslidden from God, how base and carnal we have been; and as the Lord drops some severe rebuke and cutting sentence into the conscience, the afflicted soul groans and sighs with the up-heavings of bitter reflection, and he puts his mouth into the dust with the deepest self-loathing and abhorrence.

6. But again; there are times when we get into such a state of mind as to be shaken as to the truth of God altogether. We see those perhaps whom we held in high esteem, gone utterly astray from truth, slidden back into the world, made shipwreck of their faith, or even to have died in despair. We

hear or read of ministers who once stood boldly forth as champions of truth, that they have swerved into some awful error, or have fallen into open sin, and have been made manifest as hypocrites. And perhaps those whom we ourselves have walked with, in times past, in sweet friendship, and what we then thought was soul union and communion, we see manifested as enemies of truth, and haters of the people of God. Being ourselves full of darkness and unbelief, and thus open to the withering blasts of infidelity, we pause, and say, "Is there such a thing as religion? Is it all delusion?" To see these pillars fall, it makes the very earth shake, and we say, "Is it not a lie of priestcraft altogether?" But there comes some solemn testimony out of God's word, such as a text of this kind: "Let God be true, and every man a liar" Rom. 3:4. We bow and fall down in our hearts and consciences before the testimony; and instruction is communicated to our souls from this entrance of God's word, showing us that these things must be, that it ever was so in the church; that it is God's will that there should be wheat and tares, sheep and goats; that "the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" Rom. 11:7; that God knows them that are his, and that he will keep his own people by faith unto salvation. And being brought to rest here, we are glad to abide by the immutable promises of Jehovah, and be weaned from leaning upon an arm of flesh, or putting any confidence in man.

7. But again: we want from time to time some recovery of our soul out of that state of carnality and deadness into which we often sink. We need revivals; we want to have our heart and affections drawn upwards, that "our youth may be renewed like the eagle's." We wish to plume our wings, and not always be chained down to "a body of sin and death." We desire some enlargement of heart, some revival of faith and hope, some going forth of soul after, and some spiritual

acquaintance with Christ. But it must be "the entrance of God's words," carrying a divine light into the chambers of conscience, which can alone show us our election in Christ, the cleansing away of all our sins by the atoning blood of Christ, the justification of our persons by the imputed obedience of Christ, and our certain perseverance in the faith and hope of the gospel until we arrive to the realms of endless bliss, to see Christ as he is.

8. Sometimes we want light as to the path of practical obedience in which we are called to walk. A difficulty presents itself which we cannot well surmount; or the right path is diametrically opposed to our natural wishes, or worldly interests we begin to inquire, "How shall we act in this dilemma? How shall we conduct ourselves in this matter?" An enigma has to be solved, a knot has to be untied. But what does the word of God say? What does conscience say? What do the whisperings of the Spirit say? "O," but answers the carnal mind, "**that** is such a painful path. Cannot there be a little edging? Is there not a little path in the meadows there, inside the highway? Must the feet be always galled by the rough road? Is there not a little relaxation sometimes allowed from such a strict line of conduct as the precepts of the gospel point out? May we not, in a little degree, just on one occasion, decline out of the path? Surely a little sin once in a way cannot damn a man?" Here is Satan laying his snares and endeavouring to catch the unwary traveller, striving hard to plunge us into sin, by hiding its real nature and horrible character from us, and urging us to say of it, "Is it not a little one?" Here again "the entrance of God's words giveth light," showing to us that right is right, and wrong is wrong—that what God has declared to be sinful must stand stamped for ever with his holy indignation, above all the sophistry of man and the subtlety of the devil, let them endeavour to disguise it as

much as they can. The word of God is unerring truth; what he has there revealed is, under the teachings of the Blessed Spirit, our only rule of conduct, our sure standard of practice; and when, through the entrance of his word, light is communicated, and the soul is enabled to make the sacrifice, to walk in the self-denying path, to take up the cross and follow Jesus in the regeneration, he will drop some sweet whisper, impart some blessed consolation, and manifest to the soul that it is treading in a path that leadeth to eternal glory.

Oh, that we could have more and more of the entrance of God's words into our souls to give light! What happiness, what peace should we feel at the entrance of his word, giving us light to see, and life to feel our interest in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; light into the atoning sacrifice of Jesus; light into his tender compassion for his dear people; light into the work of the Holy Ghost, the certainty of his teaching all the family of God, and the certainty of his teaching us; light in all crooked dispensations and trying paths; in poverty contempt, and hatred; light amid the persecution of professors, and the hard speeches of some of the living family of God; light upon, and life under all the difficulties that beset the way that leads to life. Oh, how happy, and how full of everything that the foul longs after should we be, if we had more of this heavenly light to show us the things of God, and seal them with sweetness and power upon our consciences! But it is the want of this light, the absence of these cheering beams, the withholding of these gleams of consolation and instruction, that leaves us so continually struggling here, and staggering there, scarcely knowing what we are, and where we are. It is the Lord hiding his blessed countenance and not unveiling it, that we may look on it, and see mercy and love shining there, which leaves many of us, at times, full of doubts and fears and

suspicious and surmises, whether we are the children of God or not. It is the not being able, experimentally and inwardly, to realise all that is contained in these words, "the entrance of thy words giveth light;" it is the not having these blessed things fulfilled in our experience, that leaves us oftentimes uncertain what to speak, what to think, or what to do. But still the promise remains good. If the Lord has made our hearts simple, if he has untwisted us, and laid us at his feet, simply desiring to be taught of him, if he has riven us asunder from that carnal policy, that empty profession, and that base hypocrisy which is stamped upon thousands, and has made our hearts spiritually upright before him, he will fulfil his own promises. Their fulfilment depends upon his own eternal faithfulness; for he hath purposed, and he will also do it, yea, he hath spoken, and he will surely bring it to pass.