

## The Veil Taken Away

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"Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be  
taken away." 2 Cor. 3:16

The Apostle, in this chapter, is drawing a comparison between the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai, or the covenant of works; the other from Mount Zion, or the covenant of grace. The former he terms the "ministration of death," and of "condemnation;" and the other, "the ministration of life," "of the Spirit," and "of righteousness." And he shews that though great was the glory of the covenant given from Mount Sinai, yet far greater is the glory of the covenant given from Mount Zion. The glory of the one being transient; and the glory of the other abiding. The glory of the one being that of killing; and the glory of the other that of making alive. The glory of the one consisting in condemning; and the glory of the other in justifying. So that, just as much as righteousness exceeds condemnation, as life excels death, and as the Spirit surpasses the letter; so does the glory of the covenant given from Mount Zion exceed the glory of the covenant given from Mount Sinai.

Speaking of himself, the Apostle says, "Seeing then that we have such hope" (a hope founded upon this better covenant of life and peace), "we use great plainness" (or "boldness," *margin*) "of speech. And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly to the end of that which is abolished;" that is, they could not look to the gospel, which is the end of the law as being perfectly fulfilled, because there was a veil over the face of Moses. Paul here alludes to what we read Exod. 34:29-35,

that when Moses came down from the Mount, the children of Israel could not bear to look upon the glory that shone upon his countenance; and therefore, "he put a veil on his face till he had done speaking with them." This the Apostle shews was a typical and figurative act, and sets forth the veil which is over the heart: that as the veil over the face of Moses hid the glory of his countenance, so the veil upon the heart of man, in his state of nature, hides from him all the glory of God that shines forth in the gospel. He therefore adds, speaking of the Jews in his time, "When Moses is read," that is, the law and the testimony contained in the books of Moses, "the veil is upon their hearts," just in the same way as the veil was upon Moses' forehead. From this he takes occasion to utter the words of the text; which contains a promise to Israel, and also bears an experimental signification. "Nevertheless when it" (that is, Israel literally and spiritually) "shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away."

In looking, then, at this portion of Holy Writ, I shall endeavour, with God's blessing, to show—what the veil is—what it is for Israel to turn to the Lord—and what it is to have the veil taken away. And may God the Spirit own his word with power to our consciences.

I.—There is, then a veil upon the human heart. And what is meant by the expression? We are not to understand by the word "veil" such as are now worn by women, which do not hide, so much as show off the features. The ancient veil worn by the Eastern women (and the same, I believe, is worn to this day), completely obscured the countenance. It was a thick covering which they wore over their face when they went abroad; it being considered to this day in the East highly indelicate that a single feature of a female's countenance should be seen. Thus Judah did not know

Tamar, though she was his own daughter-in-law, and of course he had often seen her, because "she covered herself with a veil." (Gen. 38:14, 15.)

Thus also, we find, that the veil of the tabernacle, which separated the holy of holies from the holy place, was very thick; for it consisted of four distinct coverings, as we read (Exod. 36:35), "And he made a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen." These four distinct pieces seem to have been quilted together with needlework, which we know was the case with the hanging for the tabernacle door (v. 37); and all these put together into one piece formed a thick, dense, impenetrable covering. The veil of the tabernacle was then more a curtain, or rather four curtains sewed one over the other, than what we understand by the word veil. And thus, by the veil upon the heart, we are to understand a covering, or curtain, so dense, thick, and close, as to exclude all light from penetrating through it; not merely shutting out the person from seeing, but also shutting out the person from being seen.

In looking, then, at the veil upon the heart of man by nature, we must take with us this idea of a dense, impenetrable covering, to understand what the Spirit of God means by the expression.

If we look, then, at the veil over man's heart by nature, we shall find it to consist of covering upon covering. For instance:

1. There is the veil of *ignorance*. What a thick, dense, impenetrable covering is that! If we look back to the days of darkness and unregeneracy, in what dense ignorance did we walk. The very doctrines of grace, and the whole scheme of salvation. were hidden from our eyes, and we understood not

a single truth of the gospel aright. Our minds were wrapped up in such thick clouds of ignorance, that we knew neither God nor ourselves, neither our state here or hereafter. This veil of ignorance spread over the heart seems spoken of, Isaiah 25:7, "He will destroy in this mountain *the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.*" And again, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." (Isaiah 60:2.) And thus Paul testifies that the Gentiles walk, "*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*" (Eph. 4:18.)

2. But this is not the only covering that goes to make up this thick, dense, impenetrable veil. There is the veil of *unbelief*. So that could man by the dint of his natural faculties overcome his ignorance, and thus strip off one part of the veil, the other part, that of unbelief, would still remain. Look at the scribes and Pharisees; the Lord wrought such amazing and undeniable miracles, as we should think must have convinced them that he was the Messiah: as, for instance, the raising up of Lazarus from the dead. They saw him come out of the sepulchre with their bodily eyes at the word of Jesus; but it had no effect on their minds. They saw the blind restored to sight, the lame walk, and the deaf receive hearing; but it never wrought faith in their consciences. They were, as the Apostle says, "shut up in unbelief." (Rom. 11:32, *margin*.) This is just our state by nature; unbelief has such possession of our hearts that we cannot believe the things of God till they are made known to us by divine revelation.

3. But again; there is the covering of *self righteousness*. What a motley monster is man in his natural state! Full of evil, continually committing sin, daring God to his face by a

thousand crimes, and yet setting up his own righteousness! We might just as well expect that a felon in Newgate, who is there awaiting in the condemned cell the merited punishment of his aggravated crimes, of his murders, robberies, and continued outrage against all human laws, should hope to come out of prison by his good deeds and obedience to the laws of his country, as expect such a vile wretch as man to hope to clamber up to heaven by the ladder of his good words, good thoughts, good works, and good intentions. But the veil upon his heart prevents him from seeing that by anything he can do he cannot please God. Self-righteousness in all its forms is so interlaced with every thought of our heart, so intertwined with every fibre of our natural mind, that though we know ourselves to be sinners, yet self-applause and self-complacency bid us do something to gain God's favour.

4. But again; there is the veil of *superstition*. What a hold has superstition over the minds of men! If we go into any country parish, what superstition universally reigns over the minds of those dead in sin! How church and churchyard, surplice and gown, font and altar, are well nigh worshipped! And in town, as well as country, in dissenter as well as in churchman, what superstitious feeling prevails; and how much passes off for religion and piety that was never wrought in the heart and conscience by God the Spirit! I believe there are many persons who cannot sin comfortably till they have said their prayers, and cannot launch out with an easy conscience into the pleasures of the world till they have gone to church or chapel. They must needs attend upon the ceremonies and forms of religion to get a license for sin, as a school-boy learns his task to obtain a holiday.

5. And then, there is the veil of *prejudice*. How deeply prejudiced are men's minds against the truth, and against all

who profess or preach it! Have we ourselves not in time past walked in this path? What deep prejudice have our minds been steeped in against the truths of God's word! And have we not looked upon the people who held and preached them rather as monsters than men! When I walk through the streets of the town in which I live, I can see sometimes prejudice staring out from the very eyes of the people, especially the well-dressed and respectable, whom I meet; and though they cannot, through mercy, bring anything against my life and conduct, so great is their prejudice because I hold and preach the truth, that I believe they look upon me as a worse character than an adulterer, a swearer, or a drunkard. The prejudice painted in their very features sometimes almost amuses, and sometimes annoys me; sometimes stirs up my pride, and sometimes makes me thankful that I differ from them, and suffer reproach for the Lord's sake.

6. And then, there is the veil of *enmity*. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." What bitter enmity there is in man against the humbling truths of the gospel, against all who live godly in Christ Jesus, and against everything spiritual and heavenly, or that breathes the Spirit of the Lord!

7. Then, there is the covering of *pride*. And O, what a dense veil is that, which, like an unclean bird, spreads its baneful wings over a man's heart, that he will not submit to the humbling truths of the gospel!

8. And then, there is the veil of *hypocrisy*, in which man is so deeply sunk, prompting him to every hypocritical word and action.

All these coverings, one upon another, are so spread over the heart of man by nature, that the truth of God, of itself,

cannot reach him; so that he has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no heart to feel, no conscience to submit to the power of truth. O, in what a sunken state man is! We never can abase man too much. O the gulph of misery and ruin into which he has fallen through the transgressions of our first parents! O the depths of depravity into which he has been hurled! O the bottomless abyss of destruction and guilt into which, when Adam fell, he cast himself and all his race! But though so awful is man's state, yet, "the veil" upon his heart prevents him from seeing the depths of his own fall. This is one of the worst features of man's ruin, *that it is hidden from him*, and that he knows nothing of it till, through a miracle of grace, he is plucked out of the pit of horror, and saved from going down to the abyss of hell, with all his sins and crimes upon his head. Ministers, therefore, can never abase man too much, nor point out too clearly the awful abyss of ruin and degradation into which he has fallen; and the more they point it out, the more witness have they in the consciences of those who know something of these things by painful experience. But the veil on man's heart hides from him his own ruin; and till the veil in a measure is removed, he never knows, never sees, never feels one truth aright.

II.—Now the first work, (and this leads me to the second branch of the subject) of the Spirit of God on the heart, is, not to remove the veil, that is a second work, but to discover it. If I may use such an expression, the Spirit of God breathing on a man's heart, blows away a little corner of the veil spread over it; and then we begin for the first time to see and feel that there is a veil there. The beginning of knowledge is to learn our foolishness; the beginning of mercy is to feel our misery; the beginning of salvation is to know our condemnation; and the beginning of eternal life is to pass under the sentence of everlasting death. It is thus that the Lord, in his overflowing love to the objects of his choice,

begins to deal with their consciences. *The conscience* is the place where God always begins, as the Apostle says in his own ministry, "Commending ourselves *to every man's conscience* in the sight of God:" He begins to deal with a man's conscience, when, by the secret light and life of his Spirit, he makes him see and feel something of his lost and undone state before God. Eternal realities thus are made to lie upon his conscience; the truths of God to come into his soul; and the entrance of God's word to give light to his heart.

Now where did your religion begin? It is a grand point to know where your religion began; for if the beginning be all right, all is right; and if the beginning be wrong, is it not to be feared that all the rest is wrong? Did your religion begin with conscience, for that is the place where God begins? Were eternal realities laid upon your mind? Did a sense of your sinfulness come upon your soul? Did you feel what a ruined wretch you were in the sight of a holy God? Did you see what a veil by nature there was upon your heart? As a man begins to see these things, the veil is in a measure beginning to be removed; he begins to see eternal things in a clearer light, and as the veil thins away, to feel them with a more powerful life.

Now this leads him to "turn to the Lord." When God's truth comes into the conscience, and eternal realities lie close upon the mind, and we thus see and feel that there is a veil upon our hearts, we begin to turn to the Lord that the veil may be taken away. And there is no true turning to the Lord until these things are spiritually and experimentally felt.

But what does turning to the Lord imply? It implies a turning away from everything else. We never knew our need of a Saviour till conviction of sin was brought into the conscience;

we thought we could be saved by a covenant of works till we knew something of the purity and spirituality of God's law. We thought ourselves wise in our own generation, yea, that "wisdom would almost die with us," until we felt our ignorance and blindness, and that there was a thick veil spread over our hearts.

Now, as the Lord the Spirit enables a poor sinner to turn to the Lord (for it is the Spirit's work to turn to the stronghold the "prisoners of hope,") *he begins to unfold to him who the Lord is*. This is the grand turning point, the Spirit fulfilling his covenant office in shewing a condemned sinner who the Lord is. This is the first discovery that there is a refuge; the first ray of gospel light whereby the way of escape is made known; the first dawn of hope in the soul; the first setting the feet in the way of peace. After the Lord has quickened our souls, for a time we often go, shall I say, blundering on, not knowing there is a Jesus. We think that the way of life is to keep God's commandments, obey the law, cleanse ourselves from sin, reform our lives, and cultivate universal holiness in thought, word, and action and so we go, blundering and stumbling on in darkness; and all the while never get a single step forward. But when the Lord has suffered us to weary ourselves to find the door, and let us sink lower and lower into the pit of guilt and ruin, from feeling that all our attempts to extricate ourselves have only plunged us deeper and deeper, and the Spirit of God opens up to the understanding and brings in the soul some spiritual discovery of Jesus, and thus makes known that there is a Saviour, a Mediator, and a way of escape—this is the grand turning point in our lives, the first opening in the valley of Achor of the door of hope. And when the soul has once seen that there is a Jesus, and once felt a measure of the power of his resurrection, it never goes to any other quarter for pardon, justification, and salvation. We may compare the

soul in this state to a mariner shipwrecked by night on a reef of rocks, and seeing the first dawn of light in the horizon. Does he not instinctively turn to the point where the sun is to rise? Are not his eyes anxiously fixed upon the dawning day? He does not look to the North for the sun to appear; he does not turn to the South, or to the West, but to the East, for there the dawn breaks, and there he keeps his eyes fixed till the sun rises. So with the poor shipwrecked soul cast away upon the shoals of despondency, and washed up on those rocks, where he fears he must starve or die. When the Spirit of God begins to open up with power in his conscience that there is a Jesus, that he is the only Mediator, that the Son of God has come down and taken a holy human nature into union with himself, and is now at the right hand of the Father, it is the first break of day, the first dawn of hope; and upon that bright spot does the shipwrecked soul fix his longing eyes till the Sun of Righteousness arises upon it with healing in his wings. It is a great step in a man's experience to turn wholly and solely to the Lord, and renounce all creature righteousness, all forms and ceremonies as a way of salvation. It is a great mercy to turn away from them, as the shipwrecked mariner turns away from his sinking ship, and looks to the rising sun to shew him some way of escape, and thus afford him some gleam of hope.

But, as the soul turns to the Lord, it is with earnest prayer and supplication. As we read, Jer. 31:9, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." This is the way in which the Lord always leads the people of his choice;—he creates the want, raises up the power to ask in prayer, and then graciously answers the request. "I will yet, for this," he says, "be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." (Ezek. 36:37.) "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall

search for me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:12, 13.)

III.—And this leads us to the third branch of the subject—*the taking of the veil away*. There are three steps in experience connected with the veil upon the heart. 1. The knowledge of the veil being there. 2. The turning to the Lord, that he would take the veil away. 3. The removal of it; as the Apostle speaks in the text, and also intimates a little lower down: "We all, with *open*," or, as it is literally, "with *unveiled* face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." The veil is taken away when the soul turns to the Lord. The light of his countenance, the beams of his grace, and the sheddings abroad of his mercy, dissolve and melt the veil away, just as the sun thaws away the winter snows.

1. And what does the soul see when the veil is removed? Till this dense covering was taken away, it saw nothing aright, heard nothing aright, felt nothing aright, but stumbled on in thick darkness. But when the soul turned to the Lord, and gave itself wholly and solely unto him, there was *a discovery to faith of the glorious Person of Jesus*, divine realities became manifested in the Spirit's light, and sealed upon the conscience by a measure of the Spirit's teaching. And this is what the Apostle speaks of in the next chapter, where he says, "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." (2 Cor. 4:6.) Till the veil is taken away, we do not see the glory of God shining forth in the Person of Jesus.

But what is it to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God thus shining? It is to see all the perfections of God shine forth in the glorious Person of Jesus. We cannot know God out of Christ. He is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality,

dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; *whom no man hath seen nor can see.*" (1 Tim. 6:15, 16.) "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live." (Exod. 33:20.) But the invisible God having sent his only begotten Son into the world, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person;" and he having taken into union with himself a holy human nature, it is thus, as the Spirit of God gives us light to see by faith the Person of Immanuel, that we view the glory of God shining forth in the face of the God-Man Mediator. The Lord, therefore, gently chided Philip, when he said, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (John 14:8, 9.)

2. But what do we see in the person of Jesus, when the veil is removed? We see in him all the perfections of God harmonize, and specially behold "justice and mercy meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other." And we see in this great truth, which is all the comfort of a believing soul, how that "*God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*" We see that God can pardon the sinner, and yet condemn the sin; that all the attributes of Jehovah shine forth in the face of Jesus, without clashing, without collision, and that the love, mercy, and grace of a Three-One God beam forth in the Person of Christ. We see that a propitiation has been made for sin; that atoning blood has been shed to satisfy all law-claims, "to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness;" that a sacrifice has been offered up which God has accepted; and a ransom paid which the Father has received as a complete acquittance of the debt due to divine and inflexible justice. When we see and feel this, the veil is removed. We may have been wearying ourselves, and we

should have gone on wearying ourselves to the end of our lives, trying to make ourselves righteous, to put away our sins, to purge our consciences, and reconcile our guilty souls to God. We might go on heaping up prayer upon prayer, tear upon tear, sacrament upon sacrament, and mass upon mass, and yet after all sink down into a deserved hell. And there all will sink who are not experimentally acquainted with the propitiation made for sin through the sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God. Into that pit of horror will all sink, who put confidence in any other way of salvation than the meritorious sacrifice offered up on Calvary, or look to any other way of salvation than that propitiation which the Son of God has made by his obedience and blood. What virtue and efficacy there is in his blood to purge the guilty conscience! God the Spirit lead us deeply into it!

There is a great deal of cavilling in some men's minds about the expression, "the blood of God!" 'How,' say they, 'could the Godhead bleed? How could the Godhead suffer?' But if it is not the blood of him who was God, I might just as well rely for salvation on the blood of one of the thieves that were crucified with him. What is Christ's human nature? That is the rock on which many gallant ships have struck. It is not a *person* having a distinct existence apart from the Deity of Christ; but it is a *nature*: what the Holy Ghost calls a "Holy thing," (Luke 1:35); "a body that God had prepared for him," (Heb. 10:5) taken into intimate, mysterious, and inexplicable union with the Person of the Son of God. So that, whatever that human nature did and suffered, from its intimacy and union with the Son of God, the Son of God did and suffered. Did that nature bleed? It bled as having union with Deity; it being, so to speak, the instrument that Deity made use of. To use an illustration: as my soul touches an object through my hand, or speaks its thoughts by my tongue; so Deity not being itself able to bleed, bled through the humanity. Did

that nature suffer? It was not the mere suffering of a human person, as a man might suffer; but it was the suffering of a holy nature in intimate union with the Person of the Son of God. And did that nature obey? The Son of God obeyed through and with that nature. So that, to cavil at the expression, "the blood of God," is nothing less than to strike a blow at a great fundamental truth. We might object, on the same ground, to the expression, "God our righteousness," as the Prophet speaks, "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness," that is "Jehovah our Righteousness." (Jer. 23:6). Who is our righteousness but the Son of God? And what was that righteousness but the obedience of his human nature? for Godhead could no more obey than suffer and bleed; and yet Jehovah is our righteousness. And if we do not object to the expression, "the righteousness of God," why should we cavil at the expression, "the blood of God?"

Now this is the grand mystery which faith embraces, and which is dear to the heart of every God-taught soul. What a power and efficacy, as the veil is taken off the heart, does faith see in that sacrifice! What a propitiation does it see made for sin by the blood of the Son of God! Faith does not view it as the blood of man! Can the blood of man put away sin? But when we see it as the blood of the Son of God, O what a value, efficacy, power, and glory shine forth in it! But till the veil is taken off the heart we cannot see it; nor can we, till the Spirit makes it experimentally known, learn what a divine reality there is in this blood to purge the guilty conscience.

3. So with respect to *Christ's obedience to the law*; if his obedience were merely the obedience of man, it could not justify all the persons of his elect; but being the obedience of the Son of God, who "being found in fashion as a man,

humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"—it becomes a justifying robe for every soul to whom it is imputed, and who, by the removing of the veil, takes a happy and blessed shelter under it.

4. Again. As the veil is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel *what a power there is in true religion*, what a reality in divine teaching, and what a sweetness there is in the inward testimonies of God. Most men's religion is nothing else but a round of forms. Some have their doings, some their doctrines, and others their duties; and when the one has performed his doings, the other learnt his doctrines, and the third discharged his duties, why, he is as good a Christian, he thinks, as any body; whilst all the time, the poor deceived creature is thoroughly ignorant of the kingdom of God, which stands not in word, but in power. But as the veil of ignorance and unbelief is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel that there is a power in vital godliness, a reality in the teachings of the Spirit; that religion is not to be put on and put off as a man puts on and off his Sunday clothes; but when we come away from chapel we cannot take off our religion, fold it up, and put it away into the drawer, and there let it lie safe and quiet all the week. Where vital godliness is wrought with divine power in a man's heart, and preached by the Holy Ghost into his conscience, it mingles, daily and often hourly, with his thoughts, entwines itself with his feelings and becomes the very meat and drink of his soul. But till the veil was taken away, we could put our religion on and off at pleasure; and were often glad to take off the tight Sunday coat, and slip on the easy week-day clothes.

As then we begin to see and feel the reality and power of vital godliness, it separates us from those who have only a name to live while they are dead; it makes us manifest as one of "the peculiar people;" and our friends and

companions, nay, the only persons whose society we really love, are those who have felt divine realities by divine teaching. We can no more do with a dead profession of truth, than with a dead profession of error. We can no more make friends and companions of presumptuous professors, than of swearers, adulterers, or drunkards. And feeling, or at least desiring to feel, in our hearts, light, life, savour, dew, and power for ourselves, we look out for those who have experienced these things themselves; and in whom we can read, if we have a discerning eye, the legible lines of God's Spirit written upon their conscience, or towards whom we can feel a sweet knitting of soul, as taught by the same Spirit the same realities which we believe the Holy Ghost has taught us.

Now when a man comes to this spot, to see and feel what a reality there is in the things of God made manifest in the conscience by the power of the Holy Ghost, it effectually takes him out of dead churches, cuts him off from false ministers, winnows the chaff from the wheat, and brings him into close communion with the broken-hearted family of God.

5. But as the veil is removed, the soul also begins to see and feel the *workings of inward sin that it was previously ignorant of*. The removal of the veil not merely shows us the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but every thing contrary to that glory. The pride of our heart, the power of our unbelief, the enmity of our carnal mind, the awful hypocrisy, the daring presumption, the abominable treachery, the fleshy lusts, and all the obscene imaginations of our depraved nature, that will work in us in spite of all our groans and cries to the contrary—all this, as the veil is taken off the soul, becomes more and more manifested, and we have (and O, what a sight it is!) a sight of ourselves. Did ever a man see so filthy a sight as himself? When he looks down into the

sewer of his own nature, does he not see every thing there, creeping and crawling, like tadpoles in a ditch, to disgust him?

But even this works together for good; for as a man feels a measure of light and life in his conscience, and sees and feels too more and more of the workings of his depraved nature, and the breakings forth of the hypocrisy of a treacherous heart, he is brought to look more simply and more singly to the glorious Person of the Son of God, and cast himself more sincerely and unreservedly upon that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

And thus, as the veil is removed from off the heart, he begins to drink more deeply into the spirit of the gospel, into the mind of Christ, into the reality of the things of God, into union and communion with Jesus, into the solemn renunciation of himself, into an abhorrence of evil, and separation from the world, and learns to live a life of faith upon the Son of God.

But the veil is continually (if I may use the expression) flapping back again over the heart; it is not so taken away that no more darkness is felt, no more ignorance known, no more self-righteousness, and no more of its accompanying fruits perceived. It is removed as long as the Spirit shines, as long as the soul sees light in God's light. But the veil at times seems to come back over our hearts as much as if it never had been removed. We have to walk in darkness, and have no light; and frequently have to grope for the wall like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes. We can see no beauty in Jesus, and can scarcely believe there is a Jesus. We can see none of our evidences; all seem clean swept away, and scarcely a landmark left; we can find no more cries and groans in our soul than in the emptiest professor, and can

feel no more godly sensations or spiritual movements in our hearts than if we were deceived altogether. Now we fear that there has never been a single spark of grace in our hearts; for the word of God is hid from our view, the promises buried in impenetrable darkness, and past experiences covered with a thick, black cloud. This makes a man feel more of the veil on his heart than before. The feelings of darkness, when light does not shine; the sensation of misery, when mercy is not manifested; the sense of helplessness, when strength is not given; the experience of absence, when presence is denied; all these teach us what the veil is. But O, what profitable lessons are learnt in this dark valley of humiliation, in these trials, exercises, and temptations! How, by this experience, we learn more in what vital godliness consists! How the marrow of religion is more opened up in our conscience! How we learn more to cease from our own works! How we see more what a barren wilderness there is in our own hearts! And feeling how deceitful and hypocritical it is, we learn to place less confidence in it.

And when the Lord sees fit to bring the soul out of darkness, will it not make the light more precious? The gloom that hung over the soul, will it not make God's countenance more sweet when it comes? And the unbelief, the coldness, the deadness, the depravity, the hardness, and the apparent searedness of conscience which the soul has to grapple with, will it not make it prize more and more the teachings, leadings, and guidings of God the Spirit? And thus, by these various dispensations of God, we learn more to cease from man, to cease from ourselves, to cease from our own wisdom, to look more simply, more singly, more solely and wholly unto the Lord of life and glory, and to depend more upon the Spirit to work in us that which is well pleasing in his sight.

Let me just, in a few words, sum up the whole. Look at the three steps. *The veil felt; the turning to the Lord; and the removal of the veil.* These are the three steps in the divine life, commencing when it is first communicated to the soul.

Now, if you are a child of God, taught by the Spirit, you will know one or more of these branches. You will have learnt, *first*, what it is to have the *veil over your hearts*, under which you will groan and sigh: you will experience the darkness, hardness, deadness, depravity, hypocrisy, unbelief, and presumption of your carnal mind; and under it you may groan for months, and sometimes for years, before light, life, and power manifestly come to melt the veil away.

The *next* step is, to *turn to the Lord* with all our heart and all our soul; to see and feel that there is a Saviour; I do not mean in the judgment, but in the heart and conscience. This will produce a springing up out of ourselves to lie at the feet of the Lord; that we may receive divine life out of his fulness, and feel its powerful operations in the soul. To him will flow our desires, our supplications, our pantings, and our longings to know him and him only. This is the grand turning point.

And then comes the *third* step, *the taking of the veil from off the heart*; a discovery to the soul, by the Spirit, of the glory of God in the face of Jesus; the inward reception into the heart and conscience of the Son of God with power; of his blood to cleanse the guilty conscience, of his righteousness to justify the naked soul, of his love as balm for every wound, and of all his attributes as God-Man, as suited to every want, every misery, and every sense of our wretchedness and ruin.

And this path of the just, as the light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day; so that the soul, as the Lord leads it

on, becomes more and more acquainted with its vileness and his goodness, its worthlessness and his infinite worth, its guiltiness and his blood as purging from sin, its nakedness and filthy rags and his glorious robe of righteousness. And thus, as we sink into a deeper knowledge of ourselves, we rise higher into a knowledge of Christ; and as we are brought into the wilderness, God is more glorified by leading us in it. So that, while we sink to our right spot, a sinner saved by grace, we learn to put the crown of glory upon the head of him to whom alone it belongs, yielding the praise and thanksgiving to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, as one undivided, glorious, and ever-living Jehovah, both now and for ever.