

THE RULE OF CHRIST.

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“And he shall be the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” — 2 Samuel 23:4.

No doubt, in the first place, David was speaking of the benefits of a wise and just ruler over man. In the East, where rulers are despotic, they can very soon lay on such heavy taxation and make such oppressive laws that the people are grievously impoverished. Sometimes, the inhabitants almost cease to cultivate their lands, since they feel that, if they do produce crops, they only produce them for a tyrant's table. By such cruel exactions, the trade of a country is often driven away, and fruitful lands are turned into a desert. At the present moment, there seems to be little or no reason why Palestine, for instance, should not once again become as fruitful as it used to be, were it not that the Turkish rule is so severe and so unjust that the people have no reason for industry, and no motive for economy, since they are so ground down by those who are in power. It was largely so in David's day. Nations were so completely subject to the rule of their kings that, according to the character of their ruler, was the state of the people. It is a happy circumstance for us that, as a nation, we have ended all that, but it was the prevailing state of things in the days of David. So, I suppose, as a description of what he himself had been, and as expressive of his hope of what Solomon would be, he says, “A good ruler is to a people like the rising of the sun,” Their troubles disappear; he conquers for them in foreign

wars, and he deals out justice to them at home. A good ruler removes or at least reduces the sorrows of the people over whom he rules. He is to them as “a morning without clouds. They cannot find fault with his administration, for he does them good, and no harm, all his days, and he makes even their past sorrow” to conduct to their present good. Under his rule, they enjoy a season of clear shining after a long rain of sorrow; and, by his wise laws, he makes the land so fruitful, and the people so prosperous, that he is to them “as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” No doubt that was a part of what David meant.

But, please to remember that this was David’s swan-song, for the chapter begins thus, “Now these be the last words of David.” And remember also that these last words of David are prefaced by this most important declaration, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me. So, under these circumstances, we cannot suppose that the meaning which I have given to the text can be the full interpretation of it, sings there would be no necessity for inspiration to teach that, and no need whatever for the God of Israel so to speak, and the Rock of Israel thus to deliver himself. We may feel quite sure that there must be some deeper, fuller, more mystical and spiritual meaning here.

And Christians of all times, and Jews also of former ages, have all been agreed that this passage relates to the Messiah; and we, who know that the Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, can, without the slightest difficulty, apply these words to him, and feel that they are most true concerning him. Even if they did not primarily refer to the Messiah, we should be quite right in making them do so, because, if it be a general rule that a good ruler is all this to his people, then Jesus Christ, being the best of rulers, must be all this to his people; and he, ruling among men as he does, — for this day we call him Master and Lord, — and ruling, as he does, most wisely and in the fear of God, he must be, to those who belong to his blessed kingdom, all that any other good ruler could possibly be, and far more; so that, for many reasons, we are quite right in ascribing to our Lord Jesus the language of our text: “He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”

I want to do two things; first, to show you that *this passage describes our experience of the rule of Christ*; and, secondly, to prove to you that *our experience should encourage others to receive him as their Ruler*.

I. First, then, there are many of you, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, who can join with me in saying that the text IS A TRUTHFUL DESCRIPTION OF OUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF THE RULE OF CHRIST since that dear hour which brought us to his foot, cut up all our self-righteousness by the root, and blessedly taught us to trust and rest in him.

Let us take the sentences as they stand, and let the hearts of God's children respond as I speak upon each one of them. Has it not been true, beloved, that *Jesus has been to us as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth*? Was he not so when first you saw him? You were in the dark; an Egyptian darkness that might be felt was upon you. You had aforetime walked in the feeble and fickle light of the sparks of your own kindling; but those sparks were at length all stamped out, and the light of all your candles was quenched in thickest gloom. Was it not like the rising of the sun when you

*“Saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,” —*

and as he fixed his languid eyes on you, you realized that he had suffered in your stead, and borne the wrath of God on your behalf.

The weary sentinel, who has stood upon the watch-tower all night, keeping guard in the pitiless tempest, longs to see the first streak of daylight, and he will not readily forget the moment when, in the East, he first perceived the glow which betokened the rising of the sun. He may forget that, but we shall never forget the hour when, in our deepest sorrows, we caught the first glimpse of a Savior, and of his wondrous plan of salvation. We saw that there was salvation for sinners, and we perceived that it was suitable for us; and we perceived yet more gladly the fact that we might have it, — that we might have it there and there, — by simply looking to Jesus crucified. And we did look to him; and, oh, the brightness and the glory that we then saw! I am sure that I have no need to enlarge upon that, and that I have only to awaken your joyful recollections of that wondrous period, and you will at once take down your harps from the willows, awaken all the strings to melodious praise of that rising sun which then arose with healing for you beneath its wide-spread wings.

Now, since that time, has not Jesus been as the sun in the morning, from the fact that he has never gone down? There have been clouds which have, for a time, obscured his light; in this misty world, there must be clouds. You have not always seen the golden light of Christ's love as you have seen it at certain times in your experience; yet, since you first looked to him by faith, you have never been in the same darkness that you were in before, for Jesus has never forsaken you, even though he has, for a while, hidden his face from you. Your vessel has rocked to and fro, but you have not been driven from your anchorage, your anchor has held fast even in the stormiest gale. You have been, sometimes, in great straits, yet Jesus has always been your rest and your stay. You have wandered in heart from him again and again, but he has never refused to take you back to his bosom, as Noah took back the weary dove. O soul, you know that Jesus Christ is not like the sun at his setting, when he goes from brightness into shade, but Jesus is the Sun of righteousness, which continues increasing in brilliance until it attains its perfect noontide glory! Have you not found it to be so until now? O child of God, if it were right for you to stand up, and bear your testimony here, you would say, "Yes, he has not given me transient pleasure, but constant joy. He has given me peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea. By trusting in him, I have had a continual holiday and a perpetual festival; or if I have not, it has been because my faith has flagged, or my unstable heart has wandered from his love; but HE has ever been 'as the light of the morning when the sun riseth!'"

And, brethren and sisters in Christ have we not a good hope that the light which we have enjoyed will continue with us all our journey through? Thank God, that Sun will not go down before the last stage of our life's pilgrimage shall be over. Nay, it will still rise higher and higher until the perfect day; and the perfect day has not come yet, but it will come. By faith, our souls anticipate greater knowledge of Christ, greater enjoyment of him, greater likeness to him. We expect that, as years tell upon us, although the flesh will decay, the spirit will grow stronger and stronger. We believe that we shall still "bring forth fruit in old age" "to show that the Lord is upright." We know and are fully persuaded that, with us, at eventide, it will still be light; and that, when the sun of our natural life goes down, the Sun of our spiritual life will not decline, but, rather, we shall be absent from this land of clouds, and eclipses, and shades, and enter into the glory that excelleth. Milton speaks of an angel who lives in the sun; but

what will it be to live in the light of Christ, — to live in that Sun for ever and ever? The distant glintings of his glory, the transient gleams of his face, are heaven below to us; “but what must it be to be there” where they behold him with eyes supernaturally strengthened to bear the sight, — a sight which we could not bear now? John says, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead;” and that would be the case with us if we could see him now. But, by-and-by, we shall be able to endure that beatific vision, and then we shall be favored with it, and then shall we understand to the full the meaning of these, words, “He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth.”

This must suffice for the first sentence of our text. There is not one of us, who has believed in Christ, but can say that this is true; we have not all experienced it in the same measure, but we can all say that it has been true to us up to the measure of our capacity to see this Sun, and to bear the light of his beams upon us.

Now look at the next words: “even a morning without clouds. And it is true that, *to those, in whose heart Christ has risen, he has been a morning without clouds.* When he first came to us, there was a great cloud — an inconceivably black cloud of sin which hung over us. Oh, what, tempests there were hidden in its dense shadows! Eternal hurricanes and unending destruction were couched in the black bosom of that cloud; but we saw Jesus, and the cloud instantly vanished. Where had it gone? Perhaps, at that time, we scarcely knew more than that it was gone by reason of our having looked to him. But, oh, you know the story, — how a blessed wind came, and caught that cloud, and bore it away up where there stood a lofty hill that towered above the clouds, a mountain whose summit reached to heaven itself. Can you look up, and see it? Can you bear the dazzling glory of its brightness, for it was a mountain all of sapphire, like the terrible crystal for its brightness and its glory? But the cloud came sleeping over the head of this sapphire mountain, and, lo! it burst. Dread were the volleys of its thunder; terrific were the flashes of its flame. It shivered the peaks of that wondrous mountain, and the storm burst there in terrible fury. That mountain was the Lord Jesus Christ; and, for all of us who trust him, the thunder-cloud spent itself there for ever, leaving only mercy-drops to fall on us in the valley below. Christ’s coming was to us henceforth as a morning without clouds. There is now no accusation to be brought against God’s people anywhere. If all the believers who have ever lived, or who ever shall live, could be gathered together, we might maintain that there is

not, in the whole universe, a single sin that can be laid to the charge of any soul that believes in Jesus. What saith the Scripture? “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none.” The work of the Messiah was thus revealed to Daniel, “To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins,” — dwell on that, — “to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” Do you not see, then, that, as compared to the black cloud of sin, Jesus Christ, when he came to us, was as “a morning without clouds,” since he took all that sin away?

And since that time, he has been the same to us, for no clouds have come. No clouds of fear, for instance, except some vain and foolish fears which our poor flesh has tolerated, but there has been no ground for fear. On the brightest day, in our changeful English climate, the fairest morning cannot always prophesy a clear day; and, oftentimes, in other lands, you may look long up to a cloudless sky; but, by-Sand-by, there may be a little cloud, like a man’s hand, and it will gather and grow until the storm bursts, and puts an end to the brightness of the morning. We have no fear of that happening to us, notwithstanding all our shortcomings, mistakes, errors, failures, and sins. Can any of us count them? None of us can; but they are not being treasured up against us; they are not gathering into a tempest, to burst over our devoted heads. We are not laying by in store a dreadful measure of divine wrath, to be dealt out to us by-and-by. That is to be the portion of those who are out of Christ; but those who are in Christ certainly have no need to fear any future, storm, of divine anger. As their sin is gone today, it is gone for ever, for Christ hath for ever perfected those whom he hath redeemed. Is it not a very delightful thing to live, in this sense, on a morning without clouds, — to look all around you, and to feel that there is nothing to dread now that Christ is yours, and that, above, beneath, around, there is no cause for fear? Why, sometimes, this glorious truth makes our heart beat so quickly with joy that we wonder whether it will not leap out of our physical frame, — to think that all is well, all well without, all well within, all well above, all well beloved, all well behind, all well before, all well for time, all well for eternity. “A morning without clouds,” — where will you find this, in a spiritual sense, but beneath the blessed rule of Jesus the king of kings, and Lord of lords?

So, brethren and sisters, our morning is without clouds because we have no fear of any future trouble when we live under the rule of Christ. “Ah!” says one, “but I sometimes have,” But, my dear friend, if you are really a

Christian, you have no reason to have any fear of future trouble. "But I shall grow old," says one; "perhaps I shall not be able to earn my daily bread. I am very feeble even now; and, by-and-by, I may be completely bedridden, or I may have to undergo a painful oration. I am already sadly depressed in spirit, so what shall I be when I get into even worse troubles than I have now?" Ah, my dear friend, the Lord has provided for you, not merely for tomorrow, but for all your days, and you may say, with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Some people may starve, but God's saints shall not. Every one who "walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly," may claim the ancient promise, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." You may make clouds if you like. You may take, down the telescope, and breathe on it with the hot breath of your anxiety, and then, when you look through it, you may say, "I can see clouds." There are no clouds there; it is only your breath on the glass that makes you fancy that you see them. God will make all things work together for good to you. If he shall send you troubles, it will only be when it is better for you to be troubled than to be at peace; and he will always make a way of escape for you out of them, and give you all needful support while you are in them. Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be. Be of good cheer, Mrs. Despondency and Miss Much-afraid. Fetch out your harps, and let us have a joyful tune to the praise of our ever-gracious God. There are no clouds where Jesus dwells; and where he rules, it is as "a morning without clouds."

There is not even the cloud of death to be feared. What a fuss many of us make about dying! Children of God, what a turmoil some of you sometimes make in your own souls about dying! I was speaking to a dear brother whom you all know, and he said to me, "I have once or twice lately been brought face to face with death. In extreme pain I thought that I should not be able to hold out many more minutes, and that I must die; and oh, my dear pastor," he said to me, "it seemed the sweetest thing in all the world to expect to see my Savior face to face in a few minutes. I have, sometimes," he added, "dreaded death; but when I seemed to be in the very article of death, and thought that I must soon expire, I have wondered how I could ever have entertained such thoughts." What is there for a Christian to fear in death? It is not dying, — it is living, — about which we ought to be anxious, if anxious at all. But you say, "It is the thought of the pains of death that troubles me." But pains belong to life, so do not lay them upon poor death's back. Death is the physician that eases pain; he does but lay

his skeleton hand upon the patient, and, straightway, the fever has departed, and the sufferer is where the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick."

***"One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks:
We scarce can say, 'They're gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne."***

Blessed be God, where Jesus rules, even the thought of death is not a cloud. If you are not under the rule of Jesus Christ, you will have many clouds; but if you are under his rule, if you have faith in him, and live upon him, and are a subject of his kingdom, you will find that he is to you as "a morning without clouds."

The other sentence of the text teaches us that *Jesus Christ sanctifies to his people their varied experiences*: "As the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Dear friends, even under the rule of Christ, we know that some trouble will come to us, there will be "rain." There will be the rain of sorrow for sin. That is a blessed rain; I would like to be wet through with that. Sometimes, there will be the rain of depression of spirit; but God forbid that we should have too much of that! There will be the rain of affliction and trial; but we are taught to rejoice in affliction, and to count it all joy when we fall into divers trials. Sometimes, there comes the rain of spiritual humiliation. We are conscious of our own emptiness, and we seem to be in such a place as the Valley of humiliation, of which Bunyan has written so sweetly in his "Pilgrim's Progress."

Yes, we do get times of rain, but there also come to us times of "clear shining." You know what that means to you after a time of trouble. It is very sweet, after you have been ill, to feel that you are getting better. I do not know any enjoyment in life that, to my mind, is equal to that of getting better after a severe illness; that is the "clear shining after rain." And when you have been depressed, and have got back your joy again, that is more clear shining. It is all the clearer because of the rain; and the clear shining does you the more good because there has been rain; for clear shining without rain might bring on dryness and barrenness; but when the soil has been well soaked, and the clear shining of the sun follows, then the tender grass appears; and what tender emotions of love, and joy, and peace, and

rest, and gratitude, have often come into the soul when, after we have had a heavy rain, which has deluged us, there has come the clear shining, — the full assurance, the applied promise, the conscious love, the certain presence, the blessed manifestation, the sweet communion. Many of you know, from happy experience, what I mean. I am only giving you a brief summary, for I cannot fully describe that clear shining though I have felt it full often.

Then it is that Jesus becomes to us like “the tender grass springing out of the earth.” In, the East, when there has been no rain for a long while, everything looks dry and brown; but travelers tell us that, in a few hours, after a heavy shower and a little sunshine, patches of green grass will be seen where everything was brown, and the daffodil, lily and all sorts of beautiful plants will spring up almost as if by magic. Is not that the case with us spiritually? When Jesus Christ appears to us, our soul, which had been saturated with sorrow, becomes joyous through the clear shining, and then brings forth, the tender grass of gladness, gratitude, thankfulness, and holy service for the Lord Jesus Christ. But if there be anything of that kind brought forth in us, let us remember that it is Christ himself who is the sum and substance of it all, for it is he who is as the tender grass. “Without me, ye can do nothing,” said Christ to his disciples; and the fruit of the Christian is practically Christ, for if the Christian brings forth the fruit of holiness, it is the glory of Christ reflected in him; if he is bright with hope, it is Christ within him who is the hope of glory. If there be any graces in us, they are the virtues which Christ has given to us. Our green grass is Christ himself appearing in us. Our verdure, our beauty, our fruit, our everything, is Christ manifest in us.

I like this metaphor of the “tender grass springing out of the earth.” Jesus Christ is to us what the green grass is to the field. In the story of the creation, it is suggestive to read that, the same day that God separated the water from the land, and called this “Earth”, and that “Seas”, he saw that something was needed to make it perfect. Imagine this earth just lifted up out of the waters; there are the mountains, and the little hills, and the plains, and the valleys, but they are all like masses of mud, so God says, “Let the earth bring forth grass,” — “tender grass” is in the margin, the very expression we have in our text. It looks as though God himself could not bear to see the world naked, so he wrapped it up in those beautiful green garments which are like the holiday dress of this poor brown earth; and I believe that, whenever God makes a Christian, the moment he is born

anew, God looks at him, and sees that he is just like the earth was before it was clothed with grass, so God gives him grace to enable him to bring forth fruit. One of the first, instincts of a true convert is to ask, "What can I do for Jesus Christ, "Though it is not much that he can do, it is like the grass, it covers him. Very soon the fruits begin to appear, bearing steed after their kind; it is Christ being displayed in the convert's life, and work, and fruit. I remember when Jesus Christ was to me the first fruit of righteousness that I ever brought forth; and, to this day, all the fruit I ever have, and I am sure it is the same with you, my brethren and sisters in Christ, and you are glad to confess that it is so, — comes from Christ alone! He is to us as "the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Thus I have, spoken about our experience of the rule of Christ tallying with the Word of God as we have it in our text.

II. I will spend only a few minutes in speaking upon the second part of our subject, lest I weary you. It is this, OUR EXPERIENCE SHOULD ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS THEIR RULER.

If we had found him a bad Master, we would tell you. As we have found him inexpressibly good to us, we come to you, and gladly bear our witness on his behalf. I am addressing a good many who have heard the gospel for a long time, and yet are not saved. When are you going to lay these things to heart? When shall the time of decision be? Listen to me with great earnestness for these last few minutes. I want you to receive Jesus Christ as your Ruler; but, before you do so, you must receive him as your Savior. You cannot truly say, "I will serve Christ," until you have first said, "I will trust him." The gospel message is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." May the Spirit of God enable you, at this very moment, sitting where you are, or standing in the crowd, to trust the Son of God, who lived and died that sinners might not perish. Trust him, and you are saved.

But, at the same time that you trust him, please remember that Jesus Christ has come to be a Prince as well as a Savior; and if he is to save you, you must give yourself up to him to be ruled by him. Obedience to Christ must always accompany faith in him. Jesus says to you, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" but he adds, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." Are there not some young men here

who want a Leader, — who desire to have a Pilot who will conduct them safely through the voyage of life, and land them at the port of peace. Then, accept the Lord Jesus Christ, once crucified, but now risen, and gone into the glory. Take him as Savior to cleanse you, and as Prince to govern you, and all shall be well with you for ever.

Have you come to him? That is the important point; how you come is quite a secondary matter. There is much discussion about how we are to come to Christ, but the great discussion should be about him to whom we are to come; — not so much about your coming, as about the Christ to whom you come; — not so much about your faith, as about the object of your faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you build upon the Rock of ages, you build securely; and if you rest in Jesus, you rest safely. If you come to him, you came to the right place, or, rather, to the right Person. O poor souls, there are some of you who, if you had to come to Jesus Christ in very beautiful ardor, marching like the Life Guards on parade, would never come; but you may come creeping like little children who fall at every second step that they take. So long as you do but come, you may come in the most irregular fashion, with some faith and a great deal of unbelief, — with many a doubt and many a struggle, — many a pang and many a cry, — many a groan and many a mistrust; yet, as long as you do but believe in Jesus, lean upon him, and trust in him, he will not cast you out. I sometimes find that all I can do is just to swoon away into Christ's arms; but as long as I get there, he never casts me out. It is a, very blessed thing, I find, to come to Christ arguing with myself as to why I come, and understanding much concerning his blessed person and offices, his finished work, his everlasting covenant, and the election of grace. That is a very happy way of coming to Christ; but there are hundreds of people, who are such babes in spiritual things, that they do not know these great truths; they are so weak that they cannot grasp them, and so confused in their minds that they cannot understand them. Well, then, they must come as they can; but him that cometh, enabled by the grace of God to come straightway to Jesus, — for that is the vital point, — him that cometh to thee anyhow, he will in no wise cast out.

Christ says nothing about coming to a priest for pardon. We read, in the Scriptures, of one who had sinned very grossly against Jesus; he went to the priests, and confessed his sin, and then he went out; and hanged himself; and I do not wonder that he did so, for there is no comfort to be got from a priest. But if Judas had gone to Christ, if he had been like Peter,

and had gone to the Savior, and confessed his sin, he might have been forgiven, and might have rejoiced in being pardoned. It will not do to go to man for forgiveness, you must go to Christ; and it will not do to look to yourself. Christ does not say, "Him that amends himself, I will in no wise cast out." No; but, "Him that *cometh to me.*" This subject is more fully considered in the very remarkable Sermon which is to be published on August 9th, *No. 3,000; or Come and Welcome*"; a copy of which will be sent free to any address in the world on receipt of postcard by Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, Paternoster Buildings, London.

Is not this a very simple matter? I have read a great many definitions of faith, and a great many books explaining what faith is; and I have always felt, when I have finished reading them, like the good woman who read Thomas Scott's explanation of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." After that worthy minister had sent his book to an old lady, he went round to see her, and he said to her, "Have you been reading the book I sent you?" "Oh, yes, sir," said she. "Could you understand it," asked Scott. "Well, sir," she said, "I can understand what Mr. Bunyan wrote, and I think that, one day, by the grace of God, I may be able to understand your explanation of it." It is just like that with explanations of faith. I can understand the gospel, and I have no doubt that, one day, I shall be able to understand the explanations that some writers give concerning what faith means. Very often, a cloud of words is only like a cloud of dust, and explanations of faith often minister confusion rather than edification. There is Jesus Christ; will you trust him! If you do, he will not cast you out. May he help you to trust in him now?

Do you still hang back? Then let me plead with you. You surely do not hold back from Christ because you think his service will be hard. Many of us have tried it, and we have proved that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. Oh, if you could but look the Prince Immanuel in the face, — if those blind eyes of yours could be opened, so that you could see him, — you would fall in love with him. The poet was right when he wrote, —

*“His worth if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love him too.”*

A spiritual sight of the Prince Immanuel would so enamour you of him that you would count it your honor and glory even to be allowed to unloose his shoe-latchets. I would, young men, that you would so value the Christian experience of others that you would trust Christ for yourselves. He has been a good Master to me; I have served him now for five and twenty

years, and, blessed be his name, he has never once done me or mine an ill-turn! His work is good, and his wages are good, and he himself is best of all. Oh, that you all would trust, and love, and serve him!

Do you still hang back? Then, what is your reason for doing so? Is it that you want more light? Listen. Christ is “as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,” and you say that you are wanting more light. Wanting more light, yet not coming to the sun! You are awake in the morning with your shutters closed, and your blinds down, and you are fumbling about to find a match, and you are going to strike it, and light a farthing candle, — what for? Well, after you have lit it, you are going to open the shutters, and see whether the sun is up! Very sensible behavior on your part, is it not? Yet this is what the sinner often does. He wants to get light enough to see whether Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, is shining! Oh, put away your matches and your candles! Do not look for any spiritual light but that which comes from Christ, for all the light that you ever get, unless it comes from Christ, is gross darkness. Go in your darkness to Jesus Christ, for he has light enough in himself without your carrying any light to him. We have an old proverb about carrying coals to Newcastle, but there is no folly in that compared with the folly and sin of carrying light to the Sun of righteousness. Go in your darkness to Jesus Christ, and he will be light to you.

“Oh, but!” you say, “there are the clouds! “Yes, I know there are, — your sins, your doubts, your fears, your hard hearts, and you are going to get all these put away, and then you are coming to Christ, are you? You are something like a man who might be foolish enough to say, “My heart is affected, my limbs are full of pain, and my eyes are bad; but when I get my heart better, and my limbs better, and my eyes better, I am going to a physician.” And why are you going to see a physician then? To show him what a fine fellow you are, I suppose! Why, man, the time to go to a physician is when you are sick; and the time to go to Christ is when you are sinful, when you are surrounded by clouds, for he is as “a morning without clouds.” *You* can never get rid of the clouds; but *HE* can; so you must go to him with all the clouds, and all the sins, and all the doubts about you; — with a thousand ills wrapped round you, if so it must be; — as full of devils as that poor man was out of whom Christ cast a whole legion. If you have all hell within you, if you will but go to Christ just as you are, he will deliver you, here and now, with a single word. If thou believest in him, man, thou needest no preparation for going to him.

“But,” says one, “I really want to be doing something before I come to Christ. Possibly you have noticed what a fuss is being is in various newspapers concerning that hymn which contains the words, —

*“‘Doing’ is a deadly thing,
‘Doing’ ends in death.”*

Certain gentlemen are very fond of talking about the immorality of the doctrine of justification by faith, and trying to show how it is destructive of good works. I think that those who talk thus should try to practice a few good works on their own account, and one of the good works I would suggest to them is that of being honest enough to quote the whole of a verse, instead of half. Suppose I were to go about, and say, “Oh, the Bible is a dreadful book; it says, ‘There is no God;’” somebody would very probably say to me, “How dare you make such a statement as that? The Bible says, ‘The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.’ You have quoted only part of the verse.” That is just what these objectors have done. The whole verse says, —

*“Till to Jesus’ word you cling
By a simple faith,
‘Doing’ is a deadly thing,
‘Doing’ ends in death.”*

That is true; but if you cut off the first two lines, you have not quoted fairly, and you have made the poet say what he did not say; and then you go on to say that teaching people to sing like that is teaching them to sing against good works. I am sick of this canting, hypocritical talk on the part of worldlings. They say that there is cant in the Church, and among Christians. Well, perhaps there is a little, but not half so much as there is among those who quote half a verse, and then go on to rail at Evangelical preachers as if that were all that they taught! Yet there is much of that kind of evil in many unrenewed hearts, they want to get some good thing first, and then they will come to Christ. They want to get the tender grass without coming to Christ, but they never will; for the fruits of holiness will never be produced in any man’s soul until he comes to Jesus, for Jesus is “as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” Come to Jesus Christ *for* fruit, not *with* fruit. Come to him for all good things; and, poor sinners, he will give them to you.

*“True belief, and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh,
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”*

We preach good works with all our hearts, but they can only be wrought by and through Jesus Christ; and we never dare tell sinners to do good works, and then come to Christ. That would be putting the cart before the horse, planting the stem instead of planting the root, and reversing the natural order of things, which God forbid that we should ever do! Come, you guilty; come, ye lost; come, ye ruined; my Lord Jesus loves such as you are. He has not come to heal the healthy, but the sick; he came, “not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” May he call you, and bring you, for his own name’s sake! Amen.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN PRAYERBOOK” — 716, 711, 30;
AND FROM “SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS” — 39.**