

## The Gospel of the Glory of Christ

2 Cor. 4: 6.

W. Kelly.

It is more particularly to these few words I would call your attention tonight. The words of God are deep as they are also simple and most truly reliable. I do not, therefore, at this time purpose to bring many words in an expository way before you, but to look at the concentration of the truth given in a verse usually passed over without much painstaking. What does the apostle mean by "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? It is clear that a bright knowledge is intimated, and of the highest value, not only for the present time but for all eternity. The God who spoke that light should shine out of darkness shone in our hearts (says he) for the shining forth of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. How pre-eminent the expression!

Our Lord Himself had spoken of the great importance of light and life in a depth and form peculiarly His own. But whatever the form, the same substantial truth appears where, in speaking of His own, He asked the Father that they might know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent. And what did He call it distinctively in itself and for its effect on the soul? Life eternal. There are some in great danger of making light of divine knowledge, as others are of reducing it to human ideas. Beyond doubt any knowledge of the creature is small compared with knowing the Father and the Son and the infinite work in virtue of which as well as of His personal glory He has entered into the glory whence He came. But that knowledge may be greatly adulterated, as it is often ignored. For souls cannot but suffer who approach the word of God in an intellectual way.

Not so is the believer led of the Spirit who deals with him, at first, through his conscience. Till then, what is effectual? We may see this clearly in Peter's case. For, though he may have been a converted man when he first confessed the Lord (John 1), he needed a deep lesson as to his own nothingness; as every converted soul is all the better for it, and must have it if he is to be really blest and a blessing. Is it any honour to the Lord for souls that confess His name to accommodate themselves to the ways of the world around them in the little while given us to glorify God in our body? Did you ever notice that "in our spirit" is left out of the Revised Version? Every one moderately at home with the Scriptures was aware of this, which is of importance in its measure, because not a few think they can cleave to what is good in their spirit while walking with the world in their body. Is this "doing" the truth? Is it not in every way unworthy?

Where self is not adequately judged, we cannot enjoy the Lord's infinite love to us. The heart cannot but be divided in its affections, instead of being filled with the love that passeth knowledge. But this can never be, till we are brought down to be nothing in our own sight. Hence the Lord, when Peter had been toiling with his companions all night and catching nothing, told him where to cast the net. Now those used to fishing are not generally inclined to think much of what an outsider suggests. They are as jealous of interference as satisfied with their own skill. And no doubt it would have been rather presumptuous for an ordinary man to have given that word to Peter. But it was the Second man, the last Adam. He is the Man that brought God into the world. This was the first part of His work, as the next was to put sin out of the world. It may be far from being done yet as a fact; but the ground was laid in His cross, and He will do it. The reconciling work has been wrought, on which it will all be accomplished in power by-and-by. And remember, my friends, this is the work of redemption, on which I now call you, if you have never done it before, to rest your souls — Christ's work according to

God's will, as Heb. 10 describes it through the offering of His body once for all.

Well then, we are told that Peter acted in spite of all his experience, on the word of the Lord — "At Thy word I will let down the net." The consequence was that the boats were filled to sinking. It is usually the history of things in this world when blessing comes. Earthen vessels are too weak to keep the blessing. All sorts of disorders ensue. It is not that the treasure is not good, but because even God's servants are indeed feeble. Nevertheless Peter learned a weighty lesson there; as he had to learn a good deal more before he was nothing in his own eyes.

But let us turn from the servant to his Lord, Master, and Saviour, as ready to be your Saviour tonight if you never heard His voice till now. What gave occasion to this striking expression — "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? It was the most remarkable conversion that ever took place in this world. Of course one cannot pretend to know much about other people's conversions, and one feels that everyone's conversion is of the utmost importance to himself, as it ought to be of great interest to every other believer. Still we may say that there are marked differences, and that one transcended all others, not only in its importance for him that was saved, but for the shining forth of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Saviour. It was not that of Peter, nor of Andrew, nor yet of John, but of Paul. How was Paul converted? By the voice of the Lord Jesus from heaven speaking from, and seen in, the excellent glory. For the holy mount was only a little illustration. The Lord Jesus was now in the very centre of the glory whence He appeared to Saul of Tarsus. It did not hinder that the smitten many lay prostrate on the ground. The Lord made Himself seen, and as easily in one posture of him who saw as in another. For it was a divine work, incomparably superior to all vision of the eye. It was a supernatural sight and hearing in his case — expressly meant to be so. In every respect it was a great conversion, and, what is rarely the case, a striking miracle accompanied this conversion. Christ's earthly miracles were rather signs like most to unbelievers; but with Saul of Tarsus the Lord went out of all ordinary ways, in bringing him to God, to work a stupendous wonder. For such it was that a man on earth should by the power of God see the Lord in heaven and hear His voice. The scene was in broad daylight, in the midst of a crowd of persecuting enemies, and not one of them so deadly as the man singled out by His grace.

Is there not bright hope for your soul after that? Is there a man or a woman in this company tonight so determined an enemy of the Lord Jesus as he to whom He spoke outside Damascus at the time? What a change from Saul of Tarsus to Paul the Apostle! It is the most striking conversion all Scripture shows. What was there on Saul's part to bring him to God up to that moment? Was there any — I will not say merit, but the least repentance? — even previous compunction? Was he not in the mid-career of his crusade against the name of Jesus? Was he not "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" at the time? Who was so full of religious pride? Had he not the highest authority of that day on earth? Little did he conceive that this is no safeguard, but may be the greatest illusion, as it was in his own case. He had letters from the High Priest to Damascus, authorising him to drag to prison men and women that confessed the name of the Lord Jesus. He had been only a little while before accessory to the martyrdom of Stephen, and according to every account — his own repeatedly — absolutely impenitent, ignorantly glorying in his sin. Indeed, there is nothing that so shuts out the heart from compassion as ecclesiastical pride; nothing that makes mild people more remorselessly cruel; nothing that more surely closes up every avenue to mercy. If ever a man seemed to be going straight to Satan, not only away from, but against, the only Saviour, it was Saul of Tarsus. Not a word of caution had he heeded from any quarter; not a doubt or fear as to what he was pursuing haunted his mind. He verily thought with himself, as he says, that he *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus. All that we do learn from God's account is that Saul was wholly untouched till, all being fallen to the earth,

only he heard the Lord's voice. They all knew of something occurring most extraordinary in its nature. The light from heaven exceeding that of the sun at mid-day proved itself divine. And there was a sound — I do not say more than a sound — that reached the ears of the others; but the life-giving voice of Christ did not fail to reach the one to whom it was directed. It was quickening for his soul as well as a miracle.

Now, an appeal like this brings every soul of man to a point. One either believes or rejects it. Some in rejecting it may resemble that which is so fashionable in Germany; there they strive to reduce the outside circumstances to a hailstorm, a flash of lightning, and all that sort of delusion to which those learned men give themselves up so willingly. And why? Because, being unbelievers, they hate the truth and the love of God in Christ. As for our countrymen, are they not generally more scrupulous as the rule in the things of God? Yes but they like increasingly to be, what they call, abreast of modern thought; and the reality or affectation of "learned Germans" is so very attractive to some, that if the Germans are boldly sceptical, Englishmen are not ashamed to follow them admiringly. Yes, they follow them in this, and where? Away from God and His Christ, turning their back upon that grace that not merely was toward Saul of Tarsus, but is written and preached just as much to you tonight. It was life to him then; it is no less to you also, but only if you believe on Him. Beware lest it be a great deal worse before God, if you persist in rejecting the Christ, who made it all so blessed and so efficacious to Saul of Tarsus.

Why should not that light come to you? Why not this very night? The Saviour is come, His work for sin is done. One well understands the Jew, who does not believe, in waiting for the Messiah; but what are professing Christians waiting for? What are they if only baptised and they have no faith, no life, in them? They are worse than nothing. Christian baptism means that Christ died to give remission of sins, and that sin is condemned. But what does it mean for those that have it as a rite and believe not on Him that died and rose again? Undoubtedly it is a great truth that is represented in baptism. For Christ is therein shown, not merely as the Messiah, but as the Saviour who has accomplished redemption, the propitiation for our sins, and the sacrifice and offering to God and *for* us. But He is now raised and in heavenly glory, out of which glory He revealed Himself when He spoke to Saul of Tarsus.

Clearly, then, salvation is an individual matter. Saul was the only one in that crowd that received the blessing at the time, whatever God may have done through it; for nothing was more impressive. Could there have been found on the earth a person more nicely and rigidly moral than Saul? He was not conscious in his unconverted days that he had broken the law at all. But when the light made his real state manifest, the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. He was not awakened before to know the exceeding breadth and depth of the law, and he was well satisfied with himself; he had never offended in any gross manner. He had lived in his unconverted days a more correct and just life than anyone in this hall. He was frank, straightforward, conscientious, and truthful, religious after the flesh in no common degree. Further, he was a man of great capacity. He was not at all open to the passing fashions, but profoundly attached to the faith and institutions God had given to His people.

God particularly notified his conversion, wonderful as it was in its circumstances "for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." For the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant in it. And His grace has recorded it in the Scriptures that you might be brought to the self-same salvation, seeing that Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom Paul declared himself chief. The Lord gave Paul a place that made many jealous of him; even some blessed people did not altogether relish it — those who were before him at first for instance. But Barnabas was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and so he looked for good, and loved to seek and find it.

Barnabas sought Saul when others were shy, and brought him to the apostles, and he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

Turn we once more to Him who made this revolution in the persecuting missionary of the Jewish Sanhedrim. Can you have a more magnificent proof of the grace of God in dealing with a great sinner on the spot? Would that you might hear His voice in the written word tonight! Do not dream of preparation of any moral kind; do not yield to the temptation of a religious apprenticeship — if you are subject to God's word. Nothing whatever of this kind fitted Saul for the vision of the Lord Jesus in heavenly glory. Do not question that the Lord is still speaking from the same heavenly glory. For this is the doctrine in Hebrews 12: 25. It is real, though not a miracle also as in Paul's case. As truly as He once spoke upon earth at Sinai, the same One is now speaking from heaven. In whose person did God speak on earth? It was in the Son. Now He speaks in His Son emphatically, as Heb. 1 declares. He had sent His messengers of old; but if ever there was a time when God speaks in His Son, it is now. When the gospel goes forth to your ears, it is God speaking to you from heaven in His Son. So in 2 Cor. 5 and 13 you find the apostle expressing himself similarly. What he preached was "Christ speaking in me." Nor is the gospel Paul preached confined to the apostle. He that preaches aright is one who just gives out the good news unadulterated and fresh from God. If it be the true tidings of divine grace, is it not Christ speaking in that man to your soul?

When God was speaking on earth, as on mount Sinai, what was it about? Of the sins men, Israel, were prone to. In the Ten Commandments He forbade the various evils man was inclined to then, as he always is. Take the last of them, "Thou shalt not covet." Did you ever know a man, woman, or child that did not covet — did not desire to have — what they had not got? Did you ever know a man who would not prefer to have a sovereign in his pocket rather than a shilling? Is not this coveting, though it does not mean that one is dishonest? The chief dishonesty, alas! and of every soul, is toward God. How we have wronged Him! How we have dishonoured His goodness and His will! If He wants me to have only a shilling in my pocket, why should I trouble myself? Perhaps a little industry may add a shilling or more to what I have; but let me not forget that "man's life (how much more a Christian's!) consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." All such things perish with the using. A heathen savage might put a coin in a dead man's mouth to take him over the River; but you know that all thoughts of the kind are vanity. We came naked into the world and we can bring nothing out.

All are sinners, though not in the way of Saul. But of him I have spoken particularly, because the subject calls for it, and gives such an admirable proof that even the chief of sinners may be saved; and as in this case expressly, when no plea called for mercy except God's grace, unless you add the greatness of his sins. This would be a strange sound in the ears of men, but it is not unknown to the Bible. Even in the Psalms of David, though God was then dealing by the law before grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, you may find its echo. Take for instance Ps. 25, where first in the book we hear of the forgiveness of sins — "O Jehovah, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." Think of a man in the dock claiming such a favour from the judge! Would he not think the man clean mad? So too, the gospel is thought madness by unbelievers. It is quite foreign to the ways of man, who dreams not of showing good, save in return for good. But you, a sinner, have no good before God; you neither have merit, nor can you acquire merit in His eyes; you have sins, and only sins: what can become of you?

See, too, the immense danger of thinking so much of a little education, or of abstaining on the other hand from drink. Men, if temperate and educated, seem to think themselves somewhat better, and, if not nearer to God, more in the way to the gospel. Alas! how many build on sobriety or avoiding the dramshop, and the racecourse, and the like, making of these things their righteousness. And what does the Spirit of God do with men seeking after a little righteousness of their own? When God's word

is mixed with faith, all such "righteousness" crumbles into dust. It is a barrier between his soul and salvation. He must come out of his little righteous castle, and surrender as nothing but a sinner, that he may be saved by grace through faith. It is not man that commends his love, or his anything else, to God; but "God commendeth His love towards us." And in what condition? When "without strength and ungodly;" for "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Can you ask a more conclusive proof than in Saul of Tarsus, himself the man who wrote those words for us from God? Are they not true now as then? Do you think the nineteenth century can add to or take from Scripture? The spirit of the age puffs up men, who think too much of themselves nowadays. Undoubtedly we have many conveniences — railways, steamers, electric telegraph, school boards, and what not? — all sorts of inventions which indicate progress; but is it progress in the things of God? Is it deliverance from sin? Not in the least. On the contrary, if you lean on material progress, or even intellectual, you will find it a broken reed which fails and pierces, when leaned on.

And where then is there safety for the poor sinful soul? In none but Him who is at the right hand of God; in the same One that met and converted Saul of Tarsus that day. Was it not on the spot? I do not say he was brought into peace the first moment. People are often in too great a hurry to get peace. It is of more importance that one should feel his sins thoroughly, and judge self in the light of God and His word and grace, perhaps long slighted. Through the faith of Christ's work on the cross, peace surely comes in good time; and the delay is turned by God's goodness into profit for the soul.

Christ did with the apostle just what He did on earth with the woman of Syrophenicia. She also had to bear a temporary hindrance. "He answered not a word" (Matt. 15: 23): an unusual thing on His part. But why in her's? Because she came on wrong ground. She concluded to herself from Jews who appealed to him as Son of David. But *she* had no right to any such appeal, because she was a Canaanite and not of Israel, not of David's people, but rather of the enemy. When the Son of man comes by-and-by, there will not be a Canaanite in the land. The evil stock will all have come under the solemn judgment pronounced at the beginning — "Cursed is Canaan." But for all that He is the God of grace. He is righteous in vindicating His injured name on him who despises Himself, and who has dealings with everything that is hateful to God; but He delights to take up even the worst of sinners on the spot, only He will have the sinner to know the truth of his sins. Where the soul realises that he is lost, he will find God in the fulness of His grace. Now the Syrophenician woman came with a title right for a Jew, and the Lord would bring her to feel that she had no such title to His favour. And He helped her by explaining to the disciples that He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Next she cried, "Lord, help me." Then He answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." This cleared her way, and she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." With faith thus enlightened and strengthened, the woman readily saw that even the dogs, the little dogs, eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table. Indeed the grace of God so works that the crumbs which fall to the poor dogs turn out richer food than all that was on the table. Such was Christ's wonderful way with the woman now blessed more than any other one hears of, as He testified of her faith.

But what about you, my friends? Can a poor sinner, you ask, receive perfect rest from Him that is in heavenly glory? What link can there be between the glorified Saviour and any wretched guilty one on the earth? Let me ask you, How did Christ enter into that glory? Was it not after He bore our sins in His own body on the tree? He came down, the Son, the Only-begotten Son of God, and, in infinite love, became a man; and, yet more and more wondrous love still, He who knew no sin was made sin on the cross; and the sacrifice was accepted. He bowed under the weight of sin that He might deliver those who were ruined by them; and God raised Him up from the dead, and not this merely, but set Him in

the very highest place in the heavenly glory, and set Him there as Saviour, as well as Head of the church which is His body. Oh, how wondrous that glory for Him who was humbled to the uttermost!

And God now sends the gospel, the glad news, to the needy and the lost, Jew or Gentile, not at all to persons who deserve it. In point of fact, the word of His mercy never was really to such, but now it is conspicuously for sinners; now it is expressly to the lost. You cannot really be worse than lost. To be lost is the extreme, but not of all, not merely for the life that now is, but for ever. Nevertheless, while here, though you may feel in your conscience the awful brand of "lost one," "lost," "lost," it is just the occasion for the Saviour to save you. He is the Saviour of the lost. He is the Saviour not merely of people in danger of being lost, but of the lost.

Here is the mistake in a vast deal of the preaching of the day. They do not believe man to be really lost; consequently also they as little believe that man believing is perfectly saved. It is a shilly-shally doctrine about the bad state of man, and still more so about the salvation of believers. The apostle writes of an eternal salvation, leaving us only to enjoy His love, to do His will, and serve Him. It is not merely your sins all blotted out and forgotten, and yourselves accounted righteous instead of ungodly, but perfected for ever, made children of God with the Holy Spirit enabling you to cry, Abba, Father, and waiting to be with Christ and like Him.

But the question of interest and importance may be asked, What becomes of inward evil or indwelling sin? For remember that we carry with us an evil nature, even when forgiven our iniquities. Thank God, the Lord Jesus has provided for that. It was part of His great work on the cross, as it is written in Rom. 8: 3. The whole case is there summed up, as the conclusion drawn from the preceding chapters — "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It is not only in the face of our sins, but of "sin in the flesh," or indwelling sin. Now there is nothing that troubles a believer more than this; for such a one when brought to God expects a path of brightness, not perhaps the absence of sorrow or pain, but of shame and failure. Who then looks for inward evil till he finds himself as weak as water spilt upon the ground?

Now, the old man is still there; and it is well to know it. It would not be salvation according to God if we had no sense of our utter weakness, which is true. It is part of what entails continual dependence on the Lord who died and is risen for us. If we were endowed with strength in ourselves, such as some think is given in a moment, it would nullify our constant need of Christ's priesthood. But His grace is sufficient for us; for His strength is made perfect in weakness. We are only strong as we lean on the Saviour. And those who otherwise boast only deceive themselves. Satan deceives the world, but should be unable to do more than accuse the saints. Why should they trust their own emotions, instead of the word of the living God?

Not for so uncertain a result was wrought the work by our Lord Jesus. "There is therefore no condemnation" for those that are in Him. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Such is emancipation from the law of sin and death, not merely from our sins. Sin and death are no longer a law to me. No doubt present dependence is called for. If I look to the Lord, I shall be kept from sin. If death come, its sting is gone, and hades is spoiled of victory, which is given to the believer through our Lord Jesus Christ. But more, even now the Spirit of life in Him "hath delivered me from the law of sin and death." This is far beyond pardon or justification, if the Christian does not easily enter into it all at once.

For three days, we are told, Saul was blinded by the excessive light. He believed in Jesus as the Son of God as truly as he ever did; but he reviewed himself in that light of grace and glory with increasing depth, and could only say, "Wretched man that I am," as well as hate the religious illusion

which made him the enemy of Christ and His own. It was the grace of God that thus gave him deliverance. It was a humbling work that went on thoroughly in his soul, but there was no need of some new work for Christ to do. It was to make his own experimentally what Christ had already done for the root of sin which distressed him. And so he explains in Rom. 8: 3, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Such is the way God gives us also deliverance. We have already seen by faith the blood that washes all our sins away. Here it is the condemnation that God has already executed on the principle and nature of sin — on "sin in the flesh." Christ had nothing of the sort; He had not sin any more than sins. Yet He suffered not only for our sins, but for sin. He went through the whole question, and finished it to God's glory. The blessed result of His entire work is given to the believer. And you are called to believe it. You are entitled by God to take it in all its fulness, but with all humility. And be assured that the truest of all humility is to bow to God and to what He has wrought in Christ, not to think of yourself at all. Many imagine that talking badly of ourselves is the ideal of humility; whereas the simplest and most real humility is to feel unaffectedly that we are too bad to be worth talking about. Only One is worthy of all our thoughts and words and ways, even the Lord Jesus. Him you can think of and serve wherever you may be — in the shop, kitchen, office, or out of doors, on sea, or land. He is our Lord, and the Lord of all; and you are set free from the bondage of sin to serve Him in whom you believe.

Then only, we may add from verse 4, is the righteous import of the law "fulfilled in us that walk not according to flesh but according to the Spirit." You are a Christian if you believe in Him who for you died and rose; and to be serving the Lord is not only due to His name but the simplest guard against indulging the flesh and loving the world or its things. Satan used them to crucify the Master. Hence the need of watchfulness. Our criterion is the word of God. Hence the importance of reading the word of God day by day; only it is better to read a little well than to hastily read more. So to read is disrespectful to God, and a mere form; such forms are apt to be dangerous in the long run.

How bright then, my friends, is the light of the gospel for the sinner, which the Saviour displays in the glory of God! For that glory, into which Christ has gone, is the measure of God's approbation of His Son whom man slew, and of His Son's work for our salvation. Is it not beyond all things wonderful? Christ's resurrection from among the dead was the first proof. Man put Him to death, and God raised Him up. God was clearly opposed to the world and its judgment. The people who had the law, the priesthood, and the temple; the empire that had its power ordained of God — all were blinded by the god of this age to crucify the Lord of glory. And what can we say of all the disciples? Even they had most imperfect views about the Lord. But God made all clear to faith, in setting Christ on His right hand.

There sits the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, with all the angels of God worshipping Him. I call on you to believe on Him, whatever may be your state. Put it not off; all delays are dangerous; and there is none so dangerous as about your soul, your sins, and the Saviour above all. You may never be so moved in conscience as now by the truth: God grant it may be so; but it must be in the owning of your sins before Him. If your sins be not as scarlet in your conscience, you will keep away from Him, you will sin more and get more hardened, and perhaps never hear again the call of God's grace through His own Son.

But why should you not be saved even now, young as many of you are? Look at Josiah who lived when Judah was in an evil day and judgment near. At eight years of age he was a decidedly pious child.

What will make you so? Nothing but Christ, You are in your sins, it is true; but the very name of Jesus means that He was to save from sins. Whatever be your guilt as you are, look to Him as the Saviour God exalted with His right hand to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. It is just as guilty and lost ones you are now called by the gospel to believe on Him; and, if you believe, each to say, By God's grace I am saved. Salvation does not depend in any way on the desert of the saved, but on the grace of the Saviour. Indeed, it is now a declared part of God's righteousness to justify him that believes in Jesus.

Do you know the meaning of that righteousness? The righteousness of God in the Epistles of Paul means what God owes Christ because of His work on the cross. With this God is acting consistently, both to believers and to unbelievers, that all may hear the gospel, and that believers may reap its fruit. This perhaps may put it in a plain manner to many. It does not mean Christ doing what is right to make up for our wrong doing. This may be tradition, Protestant or Romanist; but tradition is apt to be shallow and unbelieving, because it is human. The truth of God is always incomparably deeper and nobler and better. And the righteousness of God is seen in His raising up Christ and setting Him on His right hand, as well as in His blotting out your sins; and your evil nature is so completely condemned, that having died (*i.e.* with Christ) you are justified from sin. There is no deliverance so effectual as Christ's death declared in resurrection. It is the death of Christ that has established this great victory for the believer. If I believe in Him who died for my sins, I am also entitled to add that I died with Him to sin (Rom. 6). If I had been a Jew, death with Him gives me death to the law (Rom. 7). In any case the Christian is delivered now in Christ's death, not by his own death, nor at the day of judgment. Further, as we are begotten again by the word, so are we purified by the word in practice while here below. All our need is answered in every way by the grace of God through faith.

This deliverance I press on your souls. It is what God has wrought in the cross of Christ, and declared in Him risen from the dead, that you may have its reality in your souls, besides the forgiveness of your sins. Emotions, or even prayer, will not give it. God forbid that I should slight the value of prayer, or deny the heart's affections when purified by faith, any more than Christian experience. But prayer must be founded on faith and experience, growing out of it, or it is altogether worthless and unsafe. What God proposes in His gospel is to bring the soul out of the bondage, as well as the guilt, of sin. Anything short of this scarcely deserves to be called His salvation. If out of sins, but not out of sin, it would dishonour the work of the Lord Jesus. If He accomplished all, it is no better than unbelief to say, I am forgiven my sins; but as to the old man of sin, it must reign; and I can only cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?"

It is right that you should go through that state (which is not unlike the small-pox — a good thing to have it over); but it is delusion to suppose that the believer must go on all his life crying, "Who shall deliver me?" The very next verse refutes this: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not that the flesh is changed or vanishes, but that deliverance is given by God in Christ, as the next chapter fully explains. Assuredly I am not bringing in any novelty of man more than old tradition, but calling you to behold the light of the knowledge of God's glory in His face. It is, indeed, "light from heaven above the brightness of the sun;" and we, who believe, see it in the best possible way now by faith. One need not hesitate to say that Paul saw far better by faith what he saw miraculously the day he was converted. The sight of faith being divinely given is clear, calm, and fixed. The miraculous vision, however real and momentous for its object, was as overwhelming as transient. The sight of faith is steady, and grows brighter day by day.

The chapter before my text (2 Cor. 3) says, that "we all, with open (or, unveiled) face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Lord the

Spirit." Such is the position of the Christian. As there is no veil now between the holiest and the worshipper, there is none on the face of the Christian any more than of Christ, still less on the heart. The veil is on the Jew's heart, till turned to the Lord, when it will be taken away. The privilege of the Christian is with unveiled face "beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." This is not the cross, though it could not be without the work there wrought for God and the sinner. It is the glory of Christ on high after and in virtue of that work. On Him you are invited to gaze, and with rich spiritual blessing meanwhile in forming us accordingly.

What a contrast with that which abounds throughout Christendom! Compare the week's preparation, and the very look of those that approach the sacrament (so called). Why is it so? Because they are full of anxiety between righteousness on the one hand, and unworthiness on the other. How many unbelieving believers there are! Even the Psalmist could anticipatively sing, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." How much more the Christian! Beware of the notions about higher life, and by some act of faith some higher holiness. They are, more or less, a revival of a fair show in the flesh. "We all," surely puts to flight all these reveries which limit the blessing to "some" of Christ's flock. They spring from ignorance of the full gospel, which never stops short of complete deliverance, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to enjoy it. Those referred to are anxious from time to time, and call for excitement to encourage them. But visions, frames, feelings, efforts, can none of them give solid rest before God, or strengthen the weak to face a hostile world. Nothing effects this but Christ received in all the fulness of His work and glory. Look at the result here — "We all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord [that is, as He is now] are changed into the same image." There is a progressive work, but it is not making us more meet for heaven than when we were first brought to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. In His work our title is sure; our blessed meetness to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light is really that which God gave us when we believed the gospel (Col. 1: 12). But it is a true and great privilege to be fruitful, and also to grow, as the same chapter points out in verse 10. A believing child might be taken to heaven as surely as the oldest saint; but if left here for a while, there ought to be growth through the knowledge of God in all the practical ways of the Lord.

May the Lord in His grace bring home what has been set before you, that the unconverted may be roused to the danger of neglecting so great salvation, and that the converted may know how much greater is their portion in the Saviour than they have realised hitherto. Faith is the way in which the blessing comes to us, but all the worth is in Christ and His work alone. It is, therefore, all the grace of God. What does grace mean? The pure favour of God, "wherein we stand," says the apostle. What, even though I fail or sin! Do you love your child when it is naughty, and in spite of faults? If even you do, is God not to love His? I remember a Christian who owned he could not whip a naughty child unless when heated; but I also knew a mother who never whipped her naughty boy till he went to bed, when it became a serious thing to him as well as to her. This, I cannot but think, was thoroughly wise and right, and according to God. Was it not love too? So it certainly is with the Father of spirits, who, loving us perfectly, yet chastises unfailingly.

Take courage then, my friends, along the narrow way, and beware of doubts. There is no Scripture to warrant a doubt. Every Scripture is given to strengthen faith, love, and withal self-judgment. When you are conscious of wrong done against the Lord, or any one else, go to Him yourself at once, and humble yourself before Him. Confess the fault, but doubt not His abiding grace towards you. We are brought into the family of God who loves us too well to make light of our faults. He chastises us that we may be partakers of His holiness. Over the world hangs God's sentence of condemnation, because, when He came in love, it hated and rejected Christ; and it still refuses to

believe in Him. Therefore it is no question of chastising, but of condemnation when Christ appears in glory. But God chastises us when it is needed, because He has delivered us from all condemnation. The world is borne with meanwhile but will be condemned, and yet more shall be all who falsely profess the name of the Lord.

Therefore, my friends, be real. There is no full blessing without thoroughness. May the Lord grant you never to compromise His name in any way. Everything around is disposed to compromise and to take things easily here below; but this reverses what the Christian is called to. May the Lord by His word tonight encourage His own, and win those who may have been enemies like Saul of Tarsus, to their everlasting salvation, with joy and peace that will never end.

W.K.