

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE SOLAR ECLIPSE.

A Sermon

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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“I form the light, and create darkness.”—Isaiah xlv. 7.

WE are all expecting to-morrow to witness one of the greatest sights in the universe—the annular eclipse of the sun. It is possible that many of us shall have gone the way of all flesh before such a sight shall again be seen in this country and we are therefore looking for it with some degree of expectation. It is probable that hundreds and thousands of the human race will be attracted by it, to study for a few hours at least, the science of astronomy. Certain it is that our astronomers are making the most capital they possibly can of it by endeavouring to thrust it in every way under our notice, in order to induce us to make the sun, the moon, and the stars a little more the object of our attention than they have been hitherto. Surely I need offer no apology whatever if religion comes forward to-day, and asks that attention should be drawn to her, even by the eclipse itself. Without a doubt, if there be sermons in stones, there must be a great sermon in the sun; and if there be books in the running brooks, no doubt there is many a huge volume to be found in a sun suffering eclipse. All things teach us, if we have but a mind to learn. There is nothing which we can see, or hear, or feel, which may not be the channels of great instruction to us. Let us see whether this may not lead us this morning into a train of thought which may, under God's blessing, be something far better to us than the seeing of an eclipse.

I shall note this morning, in addressing you, that since the Lord creates darkness as well as light; first of all, *eclipses of every kind are part of God's way of governing the world*; in the second place, we shall notice that since God creates the darkness as well as the light, we may conclude beyond a doubt that *he has a design in the eclipse—in the darkness as well as the light*; and then, thirdly, we shall notice that *as all things that God has created, whether they be light or whether they be dark, have a sermon for us, no doubt there are some sermons to be found in this.*

I. First of all, **ECLIPSES ARE A PART OF GOD'S PLAN.** In the olden times the ignorant people in England were frightened at an eclipse, they could not understand what it meant. They were quite sure that there was about to be a war, or a famine, or a terrible fire. They were absolutely certain that something fearful would happen; for they regarded it as being a prophecy of coming ills. They were totally at a loss to account for it, and knew nothing about the theory which now so satisfactorily sets our minds at rest. And you are aware, that till this day, in the East and in other parts of the world still in the ignorance of barbarism, an eclipse is looked upon as a very horrible and a very unaccountable thing. The

Hindoos still believe that a great dragon swallows the sun, and they may be seen by thousands plunging into their sacred river, the Ganges, praying to the gods that they may set the sun at liberty, that the dragon may be compelled to disgorge him. Hundreds of other most stupid and absurd theories are still prominently believed and held in different parts of the world, and I believe that here amongst a very great number of us, an eclipse is looked upon as something contrary to the general law of nature. Now, beloved, all that understand anything of God's works, know very well that eclipses are as much a part of nature's laws as the regular sunshine, that an eclipse is no deviation from God's plan, but that it is a necessary consequence of the natural motion of the moon and the earth around the sun and each other, that there should at some stated periods be eclipses, and when we see the eclipse to-morrow, we shall not look upon it as a miracle or anything out of the ordinary course of God's providence, but we shall say it was a necessity involved in the very plan whereby God governs the earth.

And now, beloved, I have only said these things to draw your attention to other eclipses. There are certain eclipses which happen in God's providence as well as in God's grace. As in nature an eclipse is part of God's plan, and is in fact involved in it, so we believe that in providence the eclipse shall sometimes overshadow the earth. I mean, the adversities, the wars, the famines, which sometimes fall on the human race, are but a part of God's divine plan of governing the earth, and have some beneficial object in their falling upon us.

First, let me invite your attention to *providence at large*. How many times have we seen providence itself eclipsed with regard to the whole race. Behold, the Lord creates the world, and placed man upon it. "Increase and multiply," is his law. Man multiplies, fills the earth, and replenishes it. The whole earth is populated, and its valleys and hills rejoice with the voice of song. On a sudden comes an eclipse. God sends a flood of rain; he draws the plugs of the great fountains of the mighty deep, and lets the water burst up upon the earth. He bids his rain descend, not in showers, but in whole cataracts at once, and the earth becomes a void waste covered with water, and afterwards a dreary swamp covered with mud, the whole human race, with the solitary exception of eight persons, having been swept away. This is what I mean by a providential eclipse. After that God again suffers man to multiply, and the earth to be replenished. Year after year the earth laughs with harvest, and the fields are made glad with God's bounties. For seven years following each other there is such an abundance of plenty on the earth that men know not how to gather up by handfals the stores which God has cast. These seven years are overpassed, and lo! there comes an eclipse of God's bounty. There is no calf in the stall, the olive fails, and the fields yield no meat, all the land goes to Egypt to buy corn, for only in Egypt is there corn to be found. There is a great eclipse of God's bounty which happens to the world. But I need not stop to particularize the thousand instances that have happened in history. Nations have grown strong and mighty; anon there has come an eclipse of their glories, and all that has been builded has crumbled to the earth. Vast empires have been builded, and they have become great, and beneath their sway some of their people have become happy. Some savage conqueror from the north has descended with his barbarous hordes, and swept away every vestige of civilization, and the earth seems to have gone back hundreds of years. There has been a dark eclipse. Or it may have happened differently. A city is prosperous and rich. In one unhappy night a fire seizes upon it, and like the stubble before the flame, the whole city is consumed, and over the ashes of their houses the inhabitants sit down to weep and die. At another time a plague is upon the multitudes, and the pits are filled with the dead. Nations die and perish, and whole hosts of men are carried to their graves. Now, all these great eclipses of God's favour, these darkenings of the heavens, these sudden glooms that fall upon the human race, are parts of God's plan of providence. Beloved, believe me, it is God's providence, when his paths drop fatness, and when the valleys rejoice on every side. It is a part of his plan when the fields are covered with corn, and when there is grass for the cattle; but it is equally as much a part of the plan of his providence to reduce the earth to famine, and bring the human race to misery at certain stated seasons, when he sees that an eclipse is absolutely necessary for their good.

It is just the same with you in *your own private concerns*. There is a God of providence to you. Lo, these many years has he fed you, and has never denied you the supply of your wants. Bread has been given to you, and your water has

been sure. Your children have been about you. You have washed your feet with butter, you have rejoiced; you have stood fast in the ways of God, and in the ways of happiness. You have been able to say, "Our ways are ways of pleasantness, and all our paths are peace." You have not been, of all men, the most miserable, but in some respects connected with your life, and blessed by God's providence, you have been the happiest amongst the human race; and now a dark cloud has fallen upon you. The sunlight of God's providence has set while it was yet noon. When you were rejoicing in the brightness of your light, on a sudden a midday-midnight has fallen upon you, to your horror and dismay. You are made to say, "Whence does all this evil come upon me? Is this also sent of God?" Most assuredly it is. Your penury, your sickness, your bereavement, your contempt, all these things are as much ordained for you, and settled in the path of providence, as your wealth, your comfort, and your joy. Think not that God has changed. It involves no change of the sun when an eclipse overshadows it. The sun has not moved from its predestined spot. There standeth it, fixed and secure; or if it be true that it moveth, still it moveth with such regularity that to us it seemeth still. Beloved, so it is with God. It may be that his purposes are moving onward to some great and distant goal, which yet we cannot see, circling around himself in some greater circle than human knowledge yet can guess; but this is certain, that, so far as we are concerned, God is the same, and of his years there is no end, and from his fixed and settled path he hath not swerved. His glory is undimmed, even when eye cannot see it. His love is just as bright, even when the shininings of it are concealed. He hath not moved to the right hand nor to the left. With the Father of lights there is no variableness, neither the shadow of turning. He abideth fast and fixed, though all things pass away. Let me confide then in him. Eclipses in providence, like eclipses in nature, are but a part of his own grand plan, and necessarily involved in it.

I suppose that it is impossible that the earth should revolve around the sun, and that the moon should spin continually round the earth, in the same plane of their orbit, without there being eclipses. Since God has made the ellipse, or the circle, the great rule of nature, it is impossible but that eclipses should occur. Now, did you ever notice that in providence the circle is God's rule still. The earth is here to-day; it will be in the same place this day next year; it will go round the circle; it gets no further. It is just so in providence. God began the circle of his providence in Eden. That is where he will end. There was a paradise on earth, when God began his providential dealings with mankind; there will be a paradise at the end. It is the same with your providence. Naked came ye forth from your mother's womb, and naked must ye return to the earth. It is a circle. Where God has begun, there will he end; and as God has taken the rule of the circle in providence, as well as in nature, eclipses must be sure to occur. Moving in the predestined orbit of divine wisdom, the eclipse is absolutely and imperatively necessary in God's plan of government. Troubles must come; afflictions must befall; it must needs be that for a season ye should be in heaviness, through manifold temptations.

But I have said, that *eclipses must also occur in grace*, and it is so. God's rule in grace is still the circle. Man was originally pure and holy; that is what God's grace will make him at last. He was pure when he was made by God in the garden. That is what God shall make him, when he comes to fashion him like unto his own glorious image, and present him complete in heaven. We begin our piety by denying the world, by being full of love to God; we often decline in grace, and God will bring us back to the state in which we were when we first began, so that we shall rejoice in none but Christ, and give our hearts to him as we did at first. Hence, there must be an eclipse in grace, because even there the circle seems to be the rule of God's gracious government.

Now beloved, you are in the eclipse some of you to-day. I hear you crying, "Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me! I looked for light, but lo, darkness came; for peace, but behold, trouble. I said in my soul, my mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved. Lord, thou didst hide thy face, and I am troubled. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me. It was but yesterday that I could read my title clear; to-day my evidences are bedimmed, and my hopes clouded. Yesterday I could climb to Pisgah's top and view the landscape o'er, and count the fields that were flowing with milk and honey, and rejoice with confidence in my future inheritance. To-day my spirit sees no heaven, it has no

hopes, but many fears; no joys, but much distress;" and you are apt to say, dear friends, "Is this a part of God's plan with me? Can this be the way in which God would bring me to heaven?" Yes, it is even so. The eclipse of your faith, the darkness of your minds, the fainting of your hopes, all these things are but the parts of God's plan for making you ripe for the great inheritance into which you shall soon enter. These trials are but waves that wash you on to the rocks; they are but winds that waft your ship the more swiftly towards the desired haven. As David says in the psalm, so might I say to you, "So he bringeth them to their desired haven." By honour and dishonour, by evil report and by good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by comforts, by all these things is the life of your soul, and by each of these are you helped to hold on your way, and to be brought at last to the great goal and haven of your hopes. Oh! think not, Christian, that your sorrows are out of God's plan; they are necessary parts of it; and inasmuch as he will bring many heirs of God unto glory, it is necessary that through much tribulation he should bring them thither.

I have thus tried to bring out the first truth, that the eclipse is a part of God's government, and that our temporal afflictions, and our own sorrows of heart, are but a part of that grand scheme. Permit me to trespass on your patience one minute more, when I notice, that in God's great plan of grace to the world, it is just the same. Sometimes we see a mighty reformation worked in the church. God raises up men who lead the van of the armies of Jehovah. See! error flies before them like shadows before the sunlight. Behold! the strongest towers of the enemy are tottering to their fall. The shout of a King is heard in the midst, and the saints of the Lord take courage, that their great and final victory at last is come. A few more years and those reformers are dead, and their mantle has not fallen upon any. After great mountains come deep valleys. The sons of great men are often small and drivelling; so there cometh a poor lukewarm church. After the Philadelphian, state of love, there comes the Laodicean state of lukewarmness. The church sinks! and in proportion as she sinks the enemy advances. Victory! victory! victory! shout the hosts of hell; and pushing on their course, they drive back the Lord's host, and the world trembles as in the balances, for victory seems to be on the side of the enemy. Again there comes another time of refreshing, another Pentecost; some other leader is raised up of God. Another mighty judge is brought into Israel, to drive out the Hittites and the Amorites that have invaded God's Canaan.

Once more, the world rejoices and the creature that hath toiled so long, hopeth to be delivered from its bondage—alas! it sinks again. The rising hath its ebb, the summer hath its winter, and the joyous time hath its season of dependency to follow it; but, beloved, all this is a part of God's plan. Do you see how God governs the ocean? When he means to produce a flood-tide, he does not make the water come marching straight up upon the shore, but as you stand there you are absolutely certain that the sand will be covered, and that the flood will dash against the cliff at the foot of which you are standing. But you see a wave come marching up, and then it returns again, and then another wave, then it dies and rolls back and another follows it. Now, it is even so in the church of God. The day must be, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But this must be accomplished by different waves, by up-growing and decrease, by multiplying and by division. It must be by triumph and by victory, by conquest and by defeat, that at last God's great purpose shall ripen, and the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. Think not then that eclipses of our holy religion, or the failure of great men in the midst of us, or the decline of piety, is at all apart from God's plan; it is involved in it, and as God's great purpose moving in the circle to bring forth another gracious purpose on earth must be accomplished, so beloved, an eclipse must necessarily follow, being involved in God's very way of governing the world in his grace.

II. But, secondly, EVERYTHING THAT GOD DOES HAS A DESIGN. When God creates light he has a reason for it, and when he creates darkness he has a reason for it too. God does not always tell us his reason; he always has one, we call him a sovereign God, because sometimes he acts from reasons which are beyond our knowledge; but he is never an unreasoning God. It is according to the counsel of his will that he works; not according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, to show you that there is a reason, a wisdom and counsel in everything that he does. Now I cannot tell you what is God's design in

eclipsing the sun to-morrow; we can see many gracious purposes answered by it in our minds, but I do not know of what use it is to the world. It may be that if there never were an eclipse some great change might happen in the atmosphere, something far beyond the reach of all philosophical knowledge at present, but which may yet be discovered. It may be that the eclipse, like the tornado and the hurricane, has its virtue in operating upon this lower world in some mysterious way, but that we know not. However, we are not left in any darkness about other kind of eclipses; we are quite certain that providential eclipses, and gracious eclipses, have both of them their reasons. When God sends a providential eclipse he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought. When pestilence stalks through the land and sweeps away its myriads, think not that God has done an unthought-of act without an intention in it. When war, with its blood-red sword, sweeps the nations and lays the mother bleeding with her child, imagine not that this cometh in vain; God hath some design in all these things, and permit me to tell you what I believe to be God's design, when he sends troubles into the world, and when he sends troubles upon us. It is this, it is to draw our attention to himself. Well, said an old divine, "Nobody ever looks at the sun except when he is in an eclipse." You never thought about the sun yesterday; you will all of you be staring at him to-morrow. Pieces of smoked glass, telescopes, and all kinds of inventions down to a pail of water, will be used in order to look at the sun. Why don't you look at him when he is shining brightly? There is nothing interesting in that, because it is an ordinary object. Now do you not notice, that when everything goes well with the world they never think about God? People always get religious when they get into trouble. The churches were fuller in London when we had the cholera here, than they had been for many a long day. There were more ministers went to see sick people in those times than had ever been known before. People that never read their Bible, never prayed, never thought of going to God's house, were hurrying off to a place of worship, or reading their Bibles, or pretending at least to pray, though, afterwards, when it went away, they forgot all about it; yet they did think a little of it when they were in trouble. "Surely in trouble they will seek the Lord; in the day of their distress they will seek me early." Doubtless, we should entirely forget God, if it were not for some of those eclipses which now and then happen. God would not have his name remembered on earth at all by the race of man if he did not make them recollect his name, when he scourged it into them with his rod. Famine, pestilence, the sword, the flood, all these must come upon us to be terrible remembrancers, to make us think of the dread King who holds the thunders in his hand, and keeps the lightnings in his power. Doubtless, this is God's great design in his afflictive providences, to make us think of him. But there is another design. Sometimes troublous times tend to prepare the world for something better afterwards. War is an awful thing; but I doubt not, it purges the moral atmosphere, just as a hurricane sweeps away a pestilence. It is a fearful thing to hear of famine, or to hear of plague; but each of these things has some effect upon the human race. An evil generally goes to make room for a greater good. Men may bewail the fire of London, but it was the greatest blessing God could have sent to London. It burnt down a set of old houses that were placed so close together that it was impossible for them to be without the plague; and when these old things had been burnt down, there was then room for a healthier action; and there has been less plague, and less disease ever since. Many of the troubles that come to the great wide world, are meant to be like axes, to cut down some deadly upas tree, and lay it level with the ground. That tree, when it stood, scattered greater evil, though it scattered it gradually, than the injury which God sent on a sudden, did inflict, though it was more apparent to the mind, having come all at once. Ah, my hearer, God has sent thee providential trouble. Thou art not his child; thou dost not fear his name nor love him. Thou art saying, "Why has this trouble happened to me?" God has a gracious design in it. There are many men that are brought to Christ by trouble. Many a sinner has sought the Saviour on his sick bed who never would have sought him anywhere else. Many a merchant whose trade has prospered, has lived without God; he has been glad to find the Saviour when his house has tottered into bankruptcy. We have known many a person who could afford to despise God while the stream flowed smoothly on, but that same man has been compelled to bow his knee, and seek peace through the blood of Christ, when he has come into the whirlpool of distress, and the whirlwind of

trouble hath got hold upon him. There is a story told, that in the olden times, Artaxerxes and another great king were engaged in a furious fight. In the middle of the battle a sudden eclipse happened, and such was the horror of all the warriors, that they made peace there and then. Oh, if an eclipse of trouble should induce you to ground arms and seek to be reconciled unto God! Sinner, you are fighting against God, lifting the arm of your rebellion against him. Happy shall you be if that trouble which is now fallen upon you should lead you to throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and fly to the arms of God and say, "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner." It will be the best thing that thou hast ever had. Thy trouble will be far better to thee than joys could have been, if thy sorrows shall induce thee to fly to Jesus who can make peace through the blood of his cross. May this be the happy result of thine own troubles and sorrows.

But furthermore, *eclipses of grace have also their end and design.* The Christian asks why it is that God does not seem to favour him in his conscience as much as he did aforetime. "Why is it that I have not more faith? Why have the promises lost their sweetness? Why has the Word of God seemed to fail in its power in operating upon my soul? Why has God hidden his face from me?" Christian, it is that thou mayest begin to search thyself, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." God's people are afflicted in order that they may not go astray. "Before I was afflicted," said the Psalmist, "I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word." Leave a Christian alone, and he becomes like a piece of iron covered with rust; he loses all his brightness. Take the file of affliction, and once more the brightness becomes apparent. Christians without trouble would be like oysters without the sickness; they would not have produced pearls. The pearl oyster would have no pearl unless some disease had fallen upon it; and were it not that trouble lights upon the Christian, he would live without producing the pearl of a holy and contented piety. God's rods are improvers; when they are laid upon us they always mend us. God scarifies the Christian, that he may cleanse him of his weeds; he ploughs him deep that he may turn up the subsoil to the air, that the influence of the Divine Spirit may rest upon him. He puts us into the crucible and into the furnace, that the heat may burn away our dross, and may consume all our impurities. He sends us into the deep waters, that they may be like a sacred baptism to us, and may help in sanctifying us, by delivering us from our pride, our lust, our worldliness, and our conceit. Happy is the man who understands this—who knows that all things work together for good to them that love God, and believes that even an eclipse of God's countenance hath its end and design, in making him perfectly conformed to the image of Christ Jesus the Lord.

III. And now not to detain you longer, I have got a sermon or two more to preach to you from the eclipse. To-morrow, Christians, if you will just remember what I am about to say you will learn a useful lesson. What is that which will hide the sun from us to-morrow? It is the ungrateful moon. She has borrowed all her light from the sun month after month; she would be a black blot, if the sun did not shine upon her, and now see all the return she makes is, she goes impudently before his face and prevents his light from shining upon us. Do you know anything at all like that in your own history? Have you not a great many comforts which you enjoy upon earth that are just like the moon? They borrow all their light from the sun. They would be no comforts to you unless God shone in them and they reflected back the light from his countenance. What is your husband, your wife; what are your children, your friends, your house, your home? What are all these but moons that borrow their light from the sun? Oh how ungrateful it is when we let our comforts get before our God; no wonder that we get an eclipse when we put these things that God gave to be our comforts into God's own throne and make them our idols. Oh! if our children take half of our hearts, if our friends take away our souls from Jesus, if like it was with Solomon, the wife leads the heart astray, if our goods, our house, our lands become the object of our life, if we set our affections upon them instead of setting them upon the things above, no wonder that there is an eclipse. Oh! ungrateful heart that allows these moons of comfort to hide the sun. Old Master Brookes very prettily says, the husband gives his wife rings which she wears upon her finger as remembrances of his love. Suppose a wife should be so foolish as to love her jewels better than her husband, suppose she should set her heart more upon his love-tokens than upon his person, oh, what marvel if he should then take

the rings and the jewels away that she might again love him. It is even so with us; God loves his children and he gives us strong faith and gives us joy and comfort, and then if we begin to set our hearts upon these more than upon him, he will come and take them away, for saith he, "I must have all thy love. I gave thee these to win thy love, not to rob me of it, and inasmuch as thou dost divert thine heart into them, instead of allowing thy love to flow in one channel towards me; I will stop up the channel of thy comfort, that thy heart may cleave to me, and to me alone." Oh, for a heart that is like Anacreon's lyre, that would sing of love alone, that whatever subject you tried to bring to it, it would not ~~res~~ and with anything save love! Oh, that our hearts were like that towards God, so that when we tried to sing of comforts and of mercies, our hearts would only sing of God! Oh, that every string were made so divine, that it would never trill to any finger but the finger of the chief player upon my stringed instruments, the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, that we had a heart like David's harp, that none but David could play; a soul that none but Jesus could make glad and cause to rejoice! Take care Christian, lest thy comforts like the moon eclipse thy sun. That is a sermon for thee, remember it, and be wise from it.

And let the Christian recollect another sermon. Let him take his child out, and when he takes him outside the door, and he sees the sun begin to grow dark and all things fade away, and a strange colour coming over the landscape, the child will begin to cry and say, "Father the sun is going out, he is dying; we shall never have any light again." And as gradually the black moon creeps over the sun's broad surface and there remains only a solitary streak of light, the tears run down the child's eyes as he says, "The sun is nearly quenched; God has blown it out, it will never shine upon us again. We shall have to live in darkness;" and he would begin to weep for sorrow of heart. You would touch your child on the head, and say, "No, my little boy, the sun has not gone out; it is only the moon passing across its face; it will shine bright enough presently." And your boy would soon believe you; and as he saw the light returning, he would feel thankful, and would believe what you had said, that the sun was always the same. Now, you will be like a child to-morrow. When you get into trouble you will be saying, "God has changed." Then let God's Word speak to you as unto children, and let it say, "No, he has not changed; with him is no variableness, neither shadow of a turning."

"My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

And now, last of all, a total eclipse is one of the most terrific and grand sights that ever will be seen. We shall not see the eclipse here in all its majestic terror; but when the eclipse of the sun is total it is sublime. Travellers have given us some records of their own experience. When the sun has been setting far away, the mountains seemed to be covered with darkness, except upon their summits, where there was just a streak of light, when all below was swathed in darkness. The heavens grew darker and darker and darker, until at last it became as black as night, and here and there the stars might be seen shining, but beside them there was no light, and nothing could be discerned. I was thinking that if on a sudden the sun should set in ten-fold darkness, and never should rise again, what a horrid world this would be! If to-morrow the sun should actually die out, and never shine any more, what a fearful world this would be to live in! And then the thought strikes me—Are there not some men, and are there not some here, who will one day have a total eclipse of all their comforts? Thank God, whatever eclipse happens to a Christian, it is never a total eclipse: there is always a ring of comfort left; there is always a crescent of love and mercy to shine upon him. But mark thee, sinner, when thou comest to die, bright though thy joys be now, and fair thy prospects, thou wilt suffer a total eclipse. Soon shall your sun set, and set in everlasting night. A few more months, and your gaiety shall be over; your dreams of pleasure shall be dissipated by the terrible wailing of the judgment-trump; a few more months, and this gay dance of revelry on earth shall all have passed away; and that passed away, remember, you have nothing to expect in the world to come but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Can you guess what the Saviour meant, when he said "outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth?" Can any tell except those eclipsed spirits

What have been these many years writhing in the torments of eternal judgment; can any tell what is meant by that "Outer darkness!" It is darkness so thick, that hope, which lives anywhere, cannot dart even a feeble ray through its impenetrable gloom; it is a darkness so black that you have no candle of your own fancy, no fair imagination to illuminate. A horror thicker than the darkness of Egypt, a darkness that may be felt will get hold upon the spirit. "Depart, ye cursed," shall roll, like volumes of cloud and darkness over the accursed spirit. "Cursed, cursed, cursed," pronounced by the Sacred Trinity thrice, shall come, come like a three-fold ocean of unutterable depth, and shall in its caverns hide the soul beyond the reach of hope.

I am but talking in simile and figure of a matter which none of us can thoroughly understand, but which each of us must know, unless we are saved by grace. My fellow-sinner, hast thou to-day any hope that when death shall come thou shalt be found in Christ? If thou hast none, beware and tremble; if thou hast any, take care it is "a good hope through grace." If thou hast no hope, but art seeking one, hear me while I tell thee the way of salvation. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man; he lived in this world, he suffered and he died; and the object of his death was this—that all who believe may be saved. What you are required to believe is simply this. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: do you feel that you are a sinner? If so, he came to save you. All you have to do—and that grace makes you do—is to believe that he came to save sinners, and therefore came to save you. Mark, he did not come to save all; he came to save *sinners*. All men who can claim the title of sinners, Christ came to save. If you are too good to be a sinner, then you have no part in this matter; if you are too proud to confess that you are a sinner, then this has nothing to do with you; but if with a humble heart, with a penitential lip, you can say, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner," then Christ was punished for your sins, and you cannot be punished for them. Christ has died instead of you; believe on him, and you may go your way rejoicing that you are saved now, and shall be saved eternally. May God the Holy Spirit first teach you that you are a sinner, then lead you to believe that Christ died for sinners, and then apply the promise, so that you may see that he died for you; and that done, you may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," and your sun shall never set in an eclipse, but shall set on earth to rise with tenfold splendour in the upper sphere, where it shall never know a cloud, a setting, or an eclipse.