

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TRUE GOSPEL NO HIDDEN GOSPEL.

A Sermon

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“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

I THINK in this case the Revised New Testament gives a better translation than does the Authorized Version, and I will therefore read it:—“*But and if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them.*” Paul had been speaking of Moses with the veil over his face, and we lose the track of his thought if we use the word “hid” instead of veiled. Our gospel wears no veil, but exhibits all the glory of its countenance to the sons of men. Oh that they may be able steadfastly to behold it, and see in it their own salvation and the glory of the Lord.

Observe at the outset the confidence with which Paul speaks. It is abundantly evident that he has no doubt whatever that the gospel which he proclaims is assuredly true; nay, that it is so manifestly true that if those who have heard it do not accept it, it must be because the God of this world hath blinded their minds. The accent of conviction makes every word emphatic. He believes and is sure, and he is convinced that those who do not believe must be under the thralldom of the devil. This is not the ordinary style in which the gospel is preached nowadays. We hear men courteously apologize for stating anything as certain, for they are fearful of being thought narrow-minded and bigoted: we hear them prove what is clear as noonday, and back up with arguments what God himself has said; as if the sun needed candles to exhibit it, or as if God's word wanted the support of human reasoning. The apostle did not take the defensive ground at all: he carried the war across the border and assailed the unbelievers. He came forth fresh from God with a revelation, and his every word seemed to challenge men with,—“This is

God's word, believe it; for if you do not you will incur sin, and prove that you are lost, and are under the influence of the devil." When the gospel was preached in that royal style it mightily prevailed, and annihilated opposition. Cavillers came, of course. "What will this babbler say?" was a common question; but the heralds of the cross made short work of all cavillers, for they simply went on declaring the glorious gospel. Their one word was, "This is from God: if you believe it you shall be saved, if you reject it you shall be damned." They made no bones about it, but spoke like men who believed in their message, and judged that it left unbelievers without excuse. They never altered their doctrine or softened the penalty of refusing it. Like fire among stubble, the gospel consumed all before it when it was preached as God's revelation. It does not spread today with equal rapidity because many of its teachers have adopted what they fancy are wiser methods. They have become less certain and more indifferent, and therefore they reason and argue where they should proclaim and assert. Some preachers rake up all the nonsense that any scientific or unscientific man likes to bring forward, and spend half their time in trying to answer it. What can be the use of untying the knots which are tied by sceptics? They only tie more. It is not for my servant to dispute about my message, but to deliver it correctly as mine, and there leave it. If we get back again to the old platform, and speak as from God, we shall not speak in vain, for he will surely honour his own word. The preacher should either speak in God's name or hold his tongue. My brother, if the Lord has not sent you with a message, go to bed, or to school, or mind your farm; for what does it matter what you have to say of your own? If heaven has given you a message, speak it out as he ought to speak who is called to be the mouth for God. If we are to make up our gospel as we go along, out of our own heads, and compound our own theology, as chemists make up mixtures of drugs, we have an endless task before us, and failure stares us in the face. Alas for the weakness of human wit and the fallacy of mortal reasoning! But if we have to deliver what God declares we have a simple task, and one which must lead to grand results, for the Lord has said, "My word shall not return unto me void."

Where did the apostle learn to speak thus positively? He tells us in the first verse of the chapter, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." He had himself been once a persecutor; and he had been convinced of his error by the appearance of the Lord Jesus to him. This was a great deed of mercy. He now knew that his sins were forgiven him. He felt in his own heart that he was a regenerated man, changed, cleansed, new created, and this was to him overwhelming evidence that the gospel was from God. To himself at any rate the gospel was a truth past argument, needing no other demonstration than its marvellous effect upon himself. Having received mercy for himself he judged that other men were in need of mercy even as he was, and that the same gospel which had brought

light and comfort to his own soul would bring salvation to them also. This braced him to his work. By this consciousness he was made to speak as one having authority. There was no hesitancy about him, for he spoke what he had felt. Ah, friends, we not only deliver a message which we believe to be from God, but we tell out that which we have tested and tried within our own souls. An unconverted preacher must be in a sorry plight, for he lacks evidence of the truth which he proclaims. A man who is not familiar with the effect of the gospel upon his own heart must endure much disquietude when he stands up to preach upon it. What does he really know about it if he has never felt its power? But if he has been converted by its means then he is confident, and is not to be moved by the questions and quibbles of those who oppose him. His inner consciousness strengthens him in the delivery of his message. We also must feel the influence of the word that we may speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen. Having received mercy we cannot but speak of that mercy positively as of a thing which we have tested and handled: and knowing that it is God who has given us the mercy we cannot but speak with anxious desire that others may partake of divine grace.

Come we now to consider our text. Our first observation shall be: *the gospel is in itself a glorious light*, for in the fourth verse Paul speaks of the light of the glorious gospel of Christ; secondly, *this gospel is in itself plain and simple*; thirdly, *if we preach it as we ought to preach it we keep it plain*, and do not muddle it up by worldly wisdom; and fourthly, therefore, it being in itself a great light, and in itself clear, and the preaching being clear, *if men do not see it is because they are lost*: it is a fatal sign when men are unable to perceive the light of the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, THE GOSPEL IS IN ITSELF A GLORIOUS LIGHT. In countless places it is so described in the New Testament. This is the light which has come into the world. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Observe that this light *reveals the glory of Christ*, This is the new translation, and it is a valuable one—"The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." You know the Hebrews had a different mode of expression from the Greek, and if we are to read the Greek as though Paul Hebraized it, then we read it according to the version we have here,—*"the glorious gospel of Christ"*; but if we read the Greek as Greek, then it runs, *"the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."* The renderings are equally true, but the second one has a fulness and freshness of sense about it worthy of special note. The gospel reveals the glory of Christ. It tells us that he is the eternal Son of the Father, by whom all things were made, for whom all things were created, and by whom they continue to exist. This might not have been good news to us if it had stood alone, though it ought always to be good to the creature to be informed of his Creator; but the gospel further reveals to us that this ever-blessed Son of the Highest came down to earth in infinite pity, espoused our nature, and was born at Bethlehem, and became as truly man as he was assuredly God. This

was the first note of the gospel, and there was so much of delight in it that it set all the angels in heaven singing, and the shepherds who kept watch over their flocks by night heard the chorales of the first Christmas rung out from the midnight sky,—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” It could not but mean peace to man that God should become man; it could not but mean mercy to the guilty that the heir of glory should be born into their race; it must be good news to us that the offended One should take upon himself the nature of the offender. So outrang the first pure gospel music that made glad the ear of mankind. The Lord God omnipotent became Immanuel—God with us: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful.” This is the beginning of the gospel of the glory of Christ: he gained a greater glory by laying aside his divine glory. Furthermore the gospel tells us that this same mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, dwelt here among men, preaching and teaching, and working miracles of matchless mercy; everywhere proving himself to be man’s brother, sympathetic and tender and gentle, receiving to himself even the lowest of the people, and bowing himself to the least of the race. It is written, “Then drew near unto him the publicans and sinners for to hear him”; and again he took little children into his arms, and blessed them, and said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” There was a gospel about all that he did, and a glory which men who are pure in heart both see and admire. His life was good news: it was a new and a glad thing that God should dwell among men, and be found in fashion as a man. The God that hateth sin, and whose wrath burns against iniquity, tabernacled among sinners, and saw and felt their evil ways, and prayed for them, “Father, forgive them.” His glory lay in his being so patient, gentle, and self-sacrificing, and yet so just and true. Well did John say, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

But the gospel’s biggest bell, which rings out with clearest note, is that this Son of God in due time gave himself for our sins, making an offering of his whole human nature as a propitiation for the guilt of men. Herein is an excessive glory of love. What a sight it was to see him in the garden oppressed with our load of guilt till the bloody sweat was forced from him; to see him bearing that stupendous weight up to the tree, and there hanging in agonies of death, bearing the desertion of his Father, and all the thick clouds of darkness that came of it: dying the “just for the unjust to bring us to God”! It was the glory of Christ that he was there bereft of all glory. Never can a more glorious thing be said of him than that he for our sakes was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. And this is the gospel we preach, the gospel of substitution, that Jesus stood in the sinner’s place and bore in the sinner’s stead what was due to the law of God on account of man’s transgression. Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigneth from the tree.

“Fling out the banner! Let it float
Skyward and seaward, high and wide;
Our glory only in the cross,
Our only hope, the Crucified.”

No gladder news could come to man than that the incarnate God had borne man's sins and died in man's stead. Yet there is another note, for he that died and was buried is risen from the dead, and has borne our nature up into the glory, and there he wears it at the Father's right hand. His loving heart is still occupied with the same divine errand that brought him down below. He is by his intercession saving sinners whom he purchased with his blood. He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. This is the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is our Lord's glory that he mediates between man and God, pleading for the unjust ones, using as his all-prevailing argument the blood which he hath shed.

But I must not leave out the fact that he who now in glory pleads for sinners will speedily come again to gather all his own unto himself, to shed abroad on them the fulness of his own glory, and to take them up to be with him where he is. There is wondrous light in the gospel, both for the future and the present. It sets forth to us the glory of Christ, the glory of love, the glory of mercy, the glory of a blood which can wash the blackest white, the glory of a plea which can make the poorest prayer acceptable, the glory of a living and triumphant Saviour, who, having put his hand to the work, will not fail nor be discouraged till all the purposes of infinite love shall be achieved by him. This is “the gospel of the glory of Christ,” and the light of it is exceeding clear and bright.

We are now called to a second truth: the gospel is a light which *reveals* God himself, for according to our text the Lord Jesus is the image of God. Did not Jesus say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”? For, first, our Lord Jesus is the image of God in this sense, that he is essentially one with God. He is “the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person.” He is “very God of very God,” as the creed hath it, and I know not how better to express the idea. Our Lord himself said, “I and my Father are one.” But the text means more than that. Christ is the image of God in this sense, that he shows us what God is. If you know the character of Jesus you know the character of God. God himself is invisible, and is not seen of mortal eye, neither can he be comprehended of finite mind. He cannot, indeed, be truly known at all except by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. But all that can be known of God is fairly writ in capital letters in the person of Jesus. What higher conception of God can you have? Even those who have denied our Lord's deity have yet been subdued into admiration by his matchless

character. Read his life through, and see if you could improve it. Can you suggest anything that should be left out, or anything that could be added? He is God, and in him we see God as far as it is possible for us to discern that matchless Father of our spirits. Thus the gospel is full of light, revealing first the Mediator and then the Lord God himself.

Now, dear friends, this gospel of the glory of Christ *is really light to us*, that is to say, it brings with it all that the metaphor of light sets forth. First of all it brings illumination. It is a lighting up of the soul “to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” It is light to the understanding to be able to see that the Only Begotten has revealed the Father. Man feels after God if haply he may find him, and the heathen stumbles upon this and that in his blind gropings. Perhaps the world was nearest the truth when it called him “the unknown God.” When the wisdom of this world once began to define and to describe the Deity, then it proved its own folly. “The world by wisdom knew not God,” but in the person of the Lord Jesus we have the true *icon*, the image and representation of the Godhead. It cannot be said of true Christians, “Ye worship ye know not what,” for we know what we worship. Each one of us can affirm, “I know whom I have believed.” We have no question about who is our God, or what he is. There is a knowledge given by the gospel to men, which creates daylight in the understanding.

But it is light in another sense, namely, that of comfort. Let a man see God in Jesus Christ, and he cannot be unhappy. Is it sin that burdened him? Let him see Jesus Christ bearing sin in his own body on the tree, and let him believe in this same sin-bearer, and that burden is gone. Let him be fretting under the cares and trials of life, and let him get a view by faith of Jesus, an infinitely greater sufferer, sympathizing with him in his sorrow, and surely the sting of his grief is removed. Is he afraid to die? Let him hear Jesus say, “I am the resurrection and the life,” and he shall be taught rather to long for death than to dread it. Is he troubled about the things to come? Does the awful future lower darkly before him? Let him only hear Jesus say, “I am he that liveth and was dead, and am alive for evermore, amen, and hold the keys of hell and death,” and he will no longer be afraid of the separate world of spirits of which Christ hath the key; nor will he tremble at the burning of the world, and the ruin of creation, for he has a hold upon One who has said, “Because I live ye shall live also.” Never did another such a light ever shine upon the sons of men: neither for instruction nor for comfort can this eternal truth be rivalled. It were not in the power of an archangel to tell you the joy which this “gospel of the glory of Christ” has given to the sons and daughters of affliction. Wherever it comes it liberates the captive mind, and removes the pains of remorse. At the very sight of it tearful eyes are brightened till they flash with delight. Oh, the joy unspeakable of having Christ to be our Saviour, and the glorious God to be our Father. He is rich to all the intents of

bliss who knoweth this. This is light, and all else is darkness. We now advance a step, and observe that—

II. THIS GOSPEL IS IN ITSELF MOST PLAIN AND CLEAR. The gospel contains nothing which can perplex anybody unless he wishes to be perplexed. There is nothing in the gospel which a man may not apprehend if he desires to apprehend it. It is all plain to the man who yields his understanding to his God. Whenever I get a book which puzzles me very much to make out its meaning, I wish I could send it back to the author, and tell him to write it over again, because I am sure he is not very clear about his own meaning, or else he could easily make me know what he meant. A man has never fairly mastered a subject until he is able to communicate his thoughts on that subject, so that persons of ordinary intelligence can tell what he is at. Now, the Lord has in his own mind a clearly-defined way of salvation for men, and he has expressed himself without ambiguity. Certain divines like to preach an incomprehensible gospel, for it gives them the air of wisdom in the judgment of the foolish. Certain hearers prefer sermons which they cannot understand. To them the difficult and intricate are as marrow and fatness. I heard of one who said he liked a bit of gristle in the sermons, or a bone to try his teeth upon. We could easily gratify such friends, but we see no authority in Scripture for gratifying this longing. I carefully endeavour to take the stones out of the fruit before preparing the dish. When we are eating it is by no means a good thing to swallow the bones, for our digestion might not master them, and we might be injured by their presence within. Souls want spiritual nutriment, not problems and riddles. So, when a man preaches the gospel so that you cannot make head or tail of it, you need not fret, for what he has to say is not worth your trouble in listening to it. If it be the Lord's own gospel, you who are doers of the Lord's will can understand it; and if you cannot it is not the gospel of the glory of Christ, but a gospel of human inventing. The true gospel is simplicity itself.

Listen! That God should come among men and espouse our nature is so far a great mystery that we do not know *how* it could be. Blessed be God, we do not want to know *how* it was done; we only know that it was done, and that fact is enough for us. We understand that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we rejoice therein. Observe the doctrine of the atonement—this also as a fact is plain enough. How it became right for Christ to suffer in our stead, and for his sufferings to be an expiation for our sins, may be a very deep question, but the fact is clearly revealed. I do not think substitution to be a bewildering mystery, but some do. What if it is? The secret reason of it is nothing to us. If God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins our most reasonable course is to accept him. We need not quarrel with grace because we cannot understand everything about it. It is wiser to eat that which is set before us than to die of hunger because we do not know all the secrets of cookery. I am not asked to understand *how* God justifies us

in Christ, but I am asked to believe that he does so. The fact is plain enough, and the fact is the object of faith. That Jesus should suffer in my stead is a simple matter of truth, and in it there is no darkness at all. That precious doctrine that we are justified by faith, that all the merit of Christ's glorious work comes to us simply by our believing: is there any difficulty about that? I know that men may cavil till they are black in the face, but the doctrine is plain as a pikestaff. At times persons enquire, "What is believing?" Well, it is trusting, depending, leaning upon, relying upon—that is all. Is there anything hard about that? Do you want to put on your spectacles to see through it? Will it require a week to work your way into the idea? No, the fact that God was made flesh and dwelt among us, and that being found in fashion as a man he became obedient to death for our sakes, and that he now bids us simply trust him and we shall live, is as simple as any truth within the sphere of knowledge. Some people would like a gospel of puzzlement; they prefer a little confusion of the intellect; they love to wander in a luminous haze, in which nothing is clearly defined. They feel that they are getting on when they are leaving others behind, and rising into sublime absurdity. Now, suppose the gospel consisted in terrible mysteries, bristling with matters hard to be understood; suppose it required eighteen volumes to be read through before you could see it; suppose it needed mathematical precision and classical elegance before you could see it,—millions would never get to heaven, for they have never read through a single volume, and therefore they are not likely to digest a library. Some men are so busy, and some have their brains so constituted, that they never will be deep students, and if the gospel required of them deep thought and long research they might give themselves up for lost. If men needed to be philosophers in order to be Christians, the majority of men would be out of the pale of hope. If the masses of the people must read hard before they can catch the idea of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, they will never catch the idea; they must inevitably perish. And would you, learned men, like them to perish? I fear that some of you have less concern about that than about your own credit for talent and thought. For the sake of getting a profound little gospel all to yourselves you would dig a moat around the cross to keep the vulgar crowd from intruding. That is not the gospel, nor the spirit of the Lord Jesus. Take care lest you miss the truth yourselves. I fear that while you are fumbling for the latch of heaven's gate, the people whom you despise will get inside the door and be singing, "Glory, hallelujah, we have found the Saviour." The Lord permits the disputer of this world to stumble, while those who receive the kingdom of God as little children find out the great secret, and rejoice in it. Suppose the gospel had been such a difficult thing to explain, and such a very hard matter to understand, what would become of the many who are now rejoicing in Christ, and yet have by birth and constitution the most shallow capacities? It is wonderful how one but little raised above an idiot can yet grasp the gospel. What a blessing that

it is so! I have heard of a poor boy whom his teachers had been instructing for years, and one day they said to him, “Well, Jack, have you a soul?” “No, I’ve got no soul.” They feared that they had lost their labour; but their minds were changed when he added, “I had a soul once, and I lost it, and Jesus Christ came and found it, and so I let him keep it.” That was better gospel than we get from many a learned divine. He had the whole thing at his fingers’ ends. Christ had found his soul, and was keeping it for him; even he who will not fail to keep that which we have committed to his charge. We clap our hands for joy because the gospel reveals the plain man’s pathway to heaven, and makes the most illiterate wise unto salvation. The shepherd on Salisbury Plain can understand the gospel as well as the Bishop in Salisbury Cathedral; and the Dairyman’s Daughter can feel its power as fully as a Princess.

Suppose the gospel were hard to be understood, what should we do at the death-bed? We are sent for all in a hurry to see persons who have neglected attendance upon the means of grace, and are dying in ignorance. It is our sorrowful task to explain the path of life to them when they are entering upon the dark descent of death. While the lamp continues to burn we have hope, and therefore we proceed to state the way by which a sinner may return to God. Is it not well to have it packed away in a small compass, and expressed in common words? We tell them that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. What could we do if the gospel were not thus plain? Must I have a handcart, and wheel it about with me, so as to carry to each dying man half-a-dozen folios in Latin? Nothing of the kind. Right well do Cowper’s often-quoted lines set forth the plainness of the gospel, and rebuke those who reject it on that account.

“Oh how unlike the complex work of man,
 Heaven’s easy, artless, unencumber’d plan!
 No meretricious graces to beguile,
 No clustering ornaments to clog the pile:
 From ostentation as from weakness free,
 It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
 Majestic in its own simplicity.
 Inscribed above the portal from afar
 Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
 Legible only by the light they give,
 Stand the soul-quickening words—BELIEVE, AND LIVE.
 Too many, shock’d at what should charm them most,
 Despise the plain direction, and are lost.
 Heaven on such terms! (they cry with proud disdain)—
 Incredible, impossible, and vain!—
 Rebel because ’tis easy to obey,
 And scorn, for its own sake, the gracious way.”

III. Thirdly, IN THE TRUE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL THIS SIMPLICITY IS PRESERVED. Paul expressly said,—“Having this hope in us we use great plainness of speech,” and yet again, “My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” The apostle Paul was a deep thinker, a man of profound insight and subtle mind. The bent of his mind was such that he would have made a metaphysician of supreme rank, or a mystic of the deepest darkness; but he went against his natural inclination, and devoted all his energies to the unveiling of the gospel. It was a sublime self-denial for him to put on one side all his logic among the other things which he counted loss for Christ; for says he, “I determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He “determined,” he was resolute, and had made up his mind to it, or he would not have accomplished it. He was the man who wrote some things hard to be understood, which Peter mentions, but when he came to the gospel he would have nothing but simplicity there. He was tender among them as a nurse with her child, and made himself an instructor of babes, dealing out the word with such plainness as children would require. The true man of God will not veil the gospel beneath performances and ceremonies. Mark those who do this, and avoid them. We see his reverence walking with clasped hands to the right and to the left, repeating Latin sentences unknown by the people. He turns, and bobs, and turns again. We see his face for a moment and then his back. I suppose it is all meant for edification; but I, poor creature, cannot find the least instruction in it, nor, as far as I can discover, do the people who are looking on. What mean these little boys in pretty gowns, making such a smoke? And what are these flowers and images on the altar? What a splendid cross is that which adorns the priest’s back! It seems to be made of roses. The folks look on, and some are wondering where he buys his lace, while others are speculating as to the quantity of wax which will be consumed in those candles every hour; and there is the end of it. Christ is veiled behind the millinery, if he is there at all. I know numbers who would disdain to do that, and yet they hide their Lord under finery of language. It is a grand thing to mount aloft upon the wings of eloquence and display the glory of speech, till you ascend in a splendid peroration, as many another exhibition closes, with fireworks. But this is not becoming in preachers of the Lord Jesus. I always tell our young men that one of their commandments should be, “Thou shalt not perorate.” To attempt anything grand in language when we are preaching salvation is to leave our proper work. Our one business is to tell out the gospel plainly. We deal in bread, not in flowers. Let tawdry ornaments be left to the stage or to the bar, where men amuse themselves, or dispute for gain; or let these poor gewgaws be reserved for the Senate, where men will defend or denounce according as it suits their party. It is not ours to make the worse appear the better reason, or to hide truth under floods of words. As for us, we are to hide ourselves behind the

cross, and make men know that Jesus Christ came to save the lost, and that if they believe in him they shall be saved at once and for ever. If we do not make them know this we have missed our mark, however grandly we have performed. What, shall we become acrobats with words, or jugglers displaying wonders? Then God is insulted, his gospel is degraded, and souls are left to perish.

I venture to put in a word for myself, and then leave this point. I can say with the apostle, "I have used great plainness of speech," and therefore if the gospel which I have preached be hidden, I have not produced the veil. I have used vulgar words when I thought that they would be better understood, and I have told all sorts of simple stories when I thought I could make the gospel known. I have never used a hard word where I could help it. My one desire has been by manifesting the truth to touch your consciences and win your hearts. If you see not the light it is not because I have hidden it from you.

IV. With this we close. IF THE GOSPEL BE VEILED TO OUR HEARERS IT IS A FATAL SIGN. "If our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost": the god of this world has blinded their unbelieving eyes lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should dawn upon them. Not to believe, understand, appreciate, and accept the gospel is a sign of perishing. I want to put this very plainly to any here who say that they have not received the gospel, for they cannot understand it, and they see nothing remarkable in it. If you have heard it plainly preached, it is so plain in itself that if it is hid from your eyes it is because you are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. You who receive the gospel are saved; faith is the saving token. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ you are born of God: if you have accepted him as your Saviour whom God sets forth as such, then you are saved; but if you say, "No, I cannot see it," then your eyes are blinded and you are lost. The sun is bright enough, but those who have no sight are not enlightened. Do you say, I cannot receive the gospel: I want something more difficult? By sinful pride your judgment is perverted and your heart is hardened. While you are among the unbelieving you are still among the perishing, and the god of this world blindfolds you. O Spirit of God, convince men of this sin, that they believe not on Jesus Christ. This work is out of thy servant's power, but, oh, do thou perform it. Oh that our text, like a sharp lancet, may cut deep and reach the conscience. May this truth pierce between the joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of your hearts.

According to the text, he that believes not on Jesus Christ is a lost man. God has lost you; you are not his servant. The church has lost you; you are not working for the truth. The world has lost you really; you yield no lasting service to it. You have lost yourself to right, to joy, to heaven. You are lost, lost, lost, like the prodigal son when he was away from his father's house, and like the sheep that went astray from the fold. It is not only that you *will* be lost, but that you *are* lost; for "he that believeth not is condemned already,

because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” Press those two words upon your conscience,—“Condemned already”:—lost even now. You are perishing; that is to say, you are gradually passing into that condition in which you must abide for ever, as one that has perished before God, and become utterly useless and dead. It is an appalling truth that this is proved by the fact that you do not understand the gospel, or if you understand it you do not appreciate it; you do not see beauty or glory in it; or if you do in a measure appreciate it, and see some glory in it, yet it has never stirred your affection, or drawn your heart towards its great subject. In a word, you have not come to trust in Jesus. He is the only one that you can trust to, and yet you reject him. It must be the simplest thing in all world to trust in Christ, and yet you will not do that simple thing. Trust in him should be attended to at once, and ought not to be delayed, and yet you have delayed for years. If faith brings salvation, why not have salvation? Why abide still in unbelief—in unbelief of the most glorious truth that God himself ever revealed to men;—in unbelief of that which you dare not deny? Oh, what a condition to be in; wilfully in darkness, shutting your eyes to the light. You are certainly lost.

The apostle explains how a man gets into that condition. He says that Satan, the god of this world, hath blinded his mind. What a thought it is that Satan should set up to be a god. Christ is the image of God; Satan is the ape of God: he mimics God, and holds a usurped power over men’s minds and thoughts. To maintain his power he takes great care that his dupes should not see the light of the gospel. The veils he uses are such as men’s selfish hearts approve; for he speaks thus: “If you were to become a Christian, you would never get on in the world.” He claps a sovereign on each eye, and then you cannot see, though the sun shine at midday. Pride binds a silken band across the eyes, and thus again the light is excluded. Satan whispers, “If you become a Christian, you will be laughed at”: thus he hoodwinks his victim with fear of ridicule. He has many a crafty device by which he perverts the human judgment till they cannot see that which is self-evident, and will not believe that which is unquestionable. He makes the gain of heaven to seem inconsiderable when weighed with the little loss which religion may involve. He hides from the soul the bliss of sin forgiven, of adoption into God’s family, and the certainty of eternal glory, by throwing dust into the eyes, so that the mind cannot look at things truthfully.

What shall I say in closing but this: are you lost, any of you? Upon the showing of the text all of you are, to whom the gospel is hidden. Well, but thank God you may be found yet: lost today, but you need not be lost tomorrow: lost while sitting in these pews, but you may be found before you leave the Tabernacle. The Good Shepherd has come out to find the lost sheep. Have you any desire after him, any wish to return to him? Then look to him with trustful glance. You are not lost if so you look, nor shall you ever be. He that believes in Jesus is saved, and saved eternally. Are any of you blinded? You

must so be if the gospel is hid from you, so that you cannot see its brightness. Ah, but you need not remain in the dark. There is One abroad today who opens blind eyes. Cry to him as did the two blind men, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me! Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" The Messiah came on purpose to give sight to the blind: it was a part of his commission when he came forth from the Father's glory. He will give sight to you. Oh seek it.

Is the god of this world your master? He must be if you do not see the glory of the gospel; but he need not be your god any longer. I pray the Holy Spirit to help you to dethrone this intruder. Why should you adore him? What good has he ever done to you? What is there about his character that makes him worthy to be your god? Break off the yoke; burst the fetters which now hold you his slave. The true God has come in the flesh to set you free, and to destroy all the works of the devil. Whatsoever keeps you from beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ can be removed. I am sent to say in my Master's name," Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Trust the Saviour, trust the incarnate God; trust him now and trust him at once, and though a moment ago you were black as hell's midnight, you shall be clean and bright as heaven's eternal noon. In one instant sins that have taken you fifty years to accumulate shall disappear; the transgressions of all your days shall be plunged beneath the sea, and shall be found no more. Only be willing and obedient, and yield yourselves up to the incarnate God, who ever liveth to take care of those who put their trust in him. May the Lord bless you, dear friends, evermore. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians iii. 12–18;
iv. 1–10.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—485, 486, 483.