

THE DAY SPRING FROM ON HIGH

Preached on Sunday Morning, July 13, 1845, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

"Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:78, 79

Unbelief is a damning sin where it reigns; but not a damning sin where it exists, and is opposed. In other words, it is the **dominion**, not the **existence** of unbelief in the heart, that excludes from the kingdom of heaven. The reprobate are an instance of **the former**; for they live and die under the power of unbelief; as the Lord said, "If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). And the quickened elect are an instance of **the latter**.

We can scarcely find recorded two more striking instances of the existence of unbelief in the hearts of God's people than that of Thomas, and of Zacharias. Yet the very unbelief of Thomas, in whose heart the spirit of infidelity worked so powerfully that he would not believe that the Lord had risen from the dead except he should "see in his hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side," was doubtless overruled not only for the good of the church in all time, but for the good also of the unbelieving disciple, when his infidelity was effectually overcome by the power of the Lord communicating faith to his soul through the words, "Be not faithless, but believing." His belief became all the stronger for having been so powerfully assailed.

And so, doubtless, it wag with Zacharias, who, us the penalty of his unbelief, was shut up for nine months in mute silence. For when the Lord loosed his tongue, "he was filled," we read, "with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied" in that blessed hymn of praise which we have recorded at the end of the first chapter of Luke's Gospel.

The question, then, is not whether we have unbelief in our heart, but whether this unbelief is resisted. If we have nothing there but unbelief, woe be to us! But if this indwelling unbelief is by a principle of grace opposed, resisted, and struggled against, the conflict will end eventually in victory.

We may notice three things in the text;

I.—A **declaration of a most blessed fact**—"The day-spring from on high hath visited us."

II.—**The source and origin of that blessed fact**—"Through the tender mercy of our God."

III.—**Its divine fruits and consequences**—"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace."

I.—In looking at these three points connected with, and springing out of the text, I shall rather invert their order; and consider, **first, the original spring and source** of the blessings mentioned in the text. This is set forth in the words, "**Through the tender mercy of our God.**" Mercy is the source and fountain of all our spiritual blessings. And O, how sweet, suitable, and precious is that divine attribute, mercy, to those who know and feel themselves sinners! There is no attribute, no perfection in the Godhead so

suitable, so acceptable to those who are stung with guilt, as, that the Lord is "merciful and gracious" (Ex. 34:6); and that "there is forgiveness with Him that he may be feared." But we must ever bear in mind, that we can enter spiritually and experimentally into this divine attribute only in proportion to our felt need of it.

"Mercy is welcome news indeed To those who guilty stand;" but to no others. Before, therefore, we can see the depth, feel the sweetness, and drink into the preciousness of mercy, we must know by heart-felt experience that we are sinners before a holy and just God. And the deeper we are sunk into a knowledge of our state as sinners before God, the more are we in a situation to prize that blessed attribute, **mercy**.

But what is mercy? It embraces several particulars.

1.—It embraces a feeling of **pity and compassion**. But pity and compassion do not fill up the whole idea of mercy; for we read, that God's "tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 145:9). Thus the Lord, in sparing Nineveh, "remembered even the cattle" (Jon. 4:11). And when he caused the waters of the deluge to assuage it was because he "remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark" (Gen. 8:1). There is in the bosom of their Creator mercy and pity even for the brute creation. As full of mercy. He also "relieveth the fatherless and widow" (Ps. 146:9); and "loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment" (Deut. 10:18).

2. We must, therefore, add to the idea of pity and compassion, another mark, that of **pardon**, in order to show what mercy is as extended to the family of God. For the Lord's people are **sinners**; and as such, being transgressors

of God's holy law, need pardon and forgiveness. This, then, is the Lord's own description of himself; "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**" (Ex. 34:6, 7).

3. But in order to complete the full description of mercy, we must ever view it as flowing **through the blood and obedience of Immanuel**. Mercy was not, like creation a mere display of an attribute of Jehovah. If I may use the expression, it cost the Godhead a price: "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). It was not in the Father the mere exercise of compassion; it cost him the gift of his only-begotten Son. It cost the Son his own agonizing sufferings and death. It cost the Holy Ghost this price: that he should come and take up his abode in the heart of sinners, and should "bear with their manners in the wilderness." Thus mercy is not simply pity and compassion, nor is it the mere pardon of sin; but as flowing through the channel of Immanuel's precious obedience, it cost the Three-one God an infinite, unspeakable price.

But there is an expression in the text that heightens, and casts a sweet light upon this mercy. It is there called **tender mercy**; literally, as it is in the margin, "**bowels of mercy**." Not mere mercy; hut "tender mercy." Not cold and naked mercy; but mercy flowing forth out of the bowels of divine compassion. Now nothing but "tender mercy" could ever look down with compassion upon the sons of men, or pluck out of the depths of the fall such ruined wretches.

How little do we know of what we really are in the sight of a holy God! We so swim in the element of sin; it is so our natural atmosphere, that we have no conception what it is in the eyes of a pure Jehovah, who live above this atmosphere. I will endeavour to convey my meaning by an illustration. We

might be called to go out of the pure bright air into the dissecting room of a hospital, or to visit the cell of a prison, or, what is perhaps far worse, to dive into some of the haunts of poverty and misery that abound in this metropolis. What a sensation of disgust and recoil should we feel at witnessing the filth and stench! But the inhabitants feel it not; the pestilential atmosphere which they inhale in their cellars and garrets is not perceived by them; custom has rendered them insensible to it. It is the contrast with the pure air that makes us so susceptible of the change. So, the holy Three-One God dwells in an atmosphere of an infinite and eternal purity, which no finite being can comprehend; for the scripture says, "He dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16). But we sunken wretches, the loathsome spawn of a fallen parent, are so cradled and bred in an atmosphere of impurity; sin is so our element, which we draw in with every breath, and we are so habituated to it, that we by nature are as insensible of the pestilential atmosphere in which we dwell, as the fever patient of the smell of his close apartment. Thus, we cannot fully enter into the breadth, the length, the depth, and height of the tender mercy of God because we cannot fully enter into the depth of our fall. The deep precipice, the awful gulph, the bottomless abyss of man's corruption can never be fathomed by the line of the creature. But just in proportion as the Spirit of God affords us some dim and feeble views of divine purity; and contrasts that divine purity with the filth and impurity of our debased nature, do we begin to learn a little of what that mercy is which stooped so low as to under-bottom the depth of the fall, and place the everlasting arms beneath our polluted souls to extricate them from eternal perdition.

But to view mercy in its real character, we must **go to Calvary**. It is not sufficient to contrast the purity of God with

the impurity of man. That indeed affords us some view of what mercy must be to reach the depths of the fall—a side-face of that precious attribute. But to see its full face shining upon the redeemed, we must go by faith, under the secret teachings and leadings of the Holy Ghost, to see Immanuel, "God with us," grovelling in Gethsemane's garden. We must view him naked upon the cross, groaning, bleeding, agonizing, dying. We must view Godhead and manhood united together in the Person of a suffering Jesus; and the power of the Godhead bearing up the suffering manhood. We must view that wondrous spectacle of love and blood, and feel our eyes flowing down in streams of sorrow, humility, and contrition at the sight, in order to enter a little into the depths of the "tender mercy" of God. Nothing but this can really break the sinner's heart. Law and terrors do but harden, All the while they work alone; But a sense of blood-bought pardon Soon dissolves a heart of stone.

Law terrors, death and judgment, infinite purity, and eternal vengeance, will not soften or break a sinner's heart. But if he is led to view a suffering Immanuel, and a sweet testimony is raised up in his conscience that those sufferings were for him—this, and this only will break his heart all to pieces. Thus, only by bringing a sweet sense of love and blood into his heart does the Blessed Spirit show a sinner some of the depths of the tender mercy of God.

II.—But we pass on to consider that solemn declaration, that blessed fact contained in the words—"**Whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us.**" There is a connection, you will observe, betwixt the "tender mercy of God," and the visiting of "the day-spring from on high." The "tender mercy of God" is the fountain, and the "visiting of the day-spring from on high" is the stream.

Let us then endeavour, if God enable us, to unfold the mind of the Spirit in the words.

First. What is meant by the expression "**day-spring**?"

By "day-spring" is meant the day dawn, the herald of the rising sun, the change from darkness to light, the first approach of morn; in one word, the **spring of the day**.

But what is this "day-spring" spiritually? It is the intimation of the rising of the Son of righteousness. It is not the same thing as the Sun of righteousness; but it is the herald of his approach; the beams which the rising sun casts upon the benighted world, announcing the coming of Jesus, "the King in his beauty." This expression was singularly applicable in the mouth of Zacharias. The Lord of life and glory had not then appeared; he was still in the womb of the Virgin Mary. But his forerunner, John, had appeared as the precursor, the herald of his approach, and was sent to announce that the Son of righteousness was about to arise. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:6-8). All nations at that time lay in darkness, "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:2). But when the Lord of life and glory was about to appear upon earth, when he had already taken the body which was prepared for him; (Heb. 10:5), the very flesh and blood of the children (Heb. 2:14), which he was to offer as a propitiation for sin, "the day-spring from on high" had begun to dawn. God's mercy, in the face of his dear Son, was just visiting the benighted world.

But there is another, an experimental meaning, connected with the words. "The day-spring from on high" is not to be

confined to the approach of the Son of God in the flesh; but it may be extended to signify the appearance of the Son of God in the heart. I cannot be benefited by the appearing of Jesus in the flesh eighteen hundred years ago, unless he come and dwell in my soul. "The day-spring from on high" which visited the benighted Jewish church will not profit us, except that same day-spring visits our benighted heart. "The day-spring from on high" is the manifestation of God's mercy in the face of the Saviour. And when this "day-spring from on high" visits the soul, it is the first intimation, the dawning rays of the Sun of righteousness in the heart.

Now, "the day spring from on high" visits the soul with the very first divine intimation dropped into the conscience respecting the Person, work, love, and blood of the Son of God. Until this day-dawn beams upon the soul, it is for the most part ignorant of the way by which a sinner is to be saved. It has tried perhaps works of righteousness; and has toiled and striven to produce such holiness as God may be pleased with. But what has been the success of these endeavours? Have they issued in peace to the soul? Have they not rather plunged it more deeply into guilt and shame? Have they not proved the spider's web, the hypocrite's hope, a garment too short, and a bed too narrow? And yet this very striving and toiling to work out a righteousness has wrought a profitable effect: for being fully convinced by painful experience that it has none of its own, the soul is prepared to receive with faith the righteousness of the Son of God.

But the first "day-spring from on high" which usually visits the soul is from a view by precious faith of **the glorious Person** of Immanuel. Until we see by the eye of faith the glorious Person of "Immanuel, God with us," there is no day-dawn in the heart. Now we may see the doctrine of Christ's Person in our judgment long before we see it in our soul.

There is a peculiar teaching of the Spirit in making the Person of Christ inwardly known. There is a holding up of his beauty and loveliness to the eye of the spiritual understanding; a removal of the veil of ignorance and unbelief which by nature covers the heart; a raising up of a living faith to go out of itself unto Him; a heavenly affection breathed into the soul whereby it clasps Jesus in the arms of holy embrace, and says, "whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." This will be attended with melting of soul at the solemn sight, with admiration of his beauty, with adoration of his glorious Person—with the confiding of body, soul, and spirit into his keeping; with a solemn committal of all we are and have into his gracious hands, as able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day—the day of his appearing. When the heart is thus opened, the affections thus drawn forth, the spirit thus softened, and the whole soul melted at a believing sight of the glorious Person of the Son of God, "the day-spring from on high" has visited the sinner.

But, in looking at the glorious Person of the Son of God, we catch a faith's view of **his atoning blood**, and see it to be of infinite dignity. We see its unspeakable preciousness,—that it is the blood of the Son of God—that it is the holy blood, precious blood, sin pardoning, conscience-cleansing blood—that it is the only sacrifice offered to, and accepted by God the Father—that it is the only propitiation for sin—that there is no other way of salvation, and no pardon for sin, or true peace of conscience, but that which flows from its personal application. This leads the soul to look to, hang upon, trust, and confide in it, and to seek more and more after a spiritual manifestation and experimental springing of it. We thus discard our own righteousness, trample upon our doings, go out of self, and cast a longing, languishing eye towards that blood which "cleanseth from all sin."

So also with respect to the **glorious righteousness** of Immanuel. When we can see by the eye of faith that it is "the righteousness of God," because the righteousness of Immanuel, God with us; when we can realize how perfectly and completely Jesus has fulfilled the law, what a spotless obedience he has rendered to it, that he has magnified it and made it honorable, fulfilled all its holy requisitions and spiritual demands;—when we can catch a glimpse of this righteousness as "unto and upon all them that believe" and lay hold of it as all our justification in the eye of a holy God—when **this** is seen and felt, the "day-spring from on high" hath visited us.

Every manifestation of mercy, every testimony from God, every mark and sign in our favour, every evidence that our spot is the spot of God's children, every promise applied with power, every holy affection, every tender sensation, every filial dependence upon God's faithfulness, every breathing out of the heart at the footstool of mercy, either is, or is connected with, the visiting of this "day-spring from on high." Every ray of spiritual light, every sensation of divine life, every feeling of humility, every emotion of godly sorrow; whatever there is in the soul heavenly, holy and God-like, all arise from "the day-spring from on high" that hath visited us.

But what a sweetness there is in the expression, "**visited** us!" What is conveyed by it? One idea contained in it is, that it is **the act of a friend**. If I have a friend, and I visit him, my visit is a mark of my friendship and affection. Thus the word implies that there is a tenderness and affection in "the day-spring"—that it comes to us in a friendly manner, that it is not the wrath of God to destroy, but the mercy of God to save.

But another idea connected with the word "visit," is that of **unexpectedness**. Is it not so sometimes naturally? We have an unexpected, visit. We may have been looking for our friend to call; but the time passes away, and no well-known rap is heard at our door. We wonder why our friend delays his coming so long. But perhaps, when we are least expecting it, the form of our friend appears. So spiritually. We may be longing and languishing, hoping, and expecting the visit of "the day-spring from on high;" but it does not appear; the Lord delayeth his coming; there is no intimation of his appearing, no putting in of his hand by the hole of the door, no looking in through the lattice, no glimpse nor glance of his lovely countenance. But perhaps, when least expected, and least anticipated; when the mind is so deeply sunk as scarcely to dare to hope, so shut up in unbelief as hardly able to vent forth a sigh, "the day-spring from on high" will visit the soul, and be all the more precious for coming so suddenly and unexpectedly.

III.—But this "day-spring from on high" visits the soul to **produce certain effects**. Two of them are specified in the text. "To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death;" that is one: "to guide our feet in the way of peace;" that is the other.

1. "**To give light to them, that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.**" Is this what "the day-spring from on high" visiting us is to do? Must we not then know something of the experience here described to be blest with the visit? Must we not feelingly know what it is to "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death," that we may receive those heavenly visitations which preserve our spirit? Let us see if we know anything about the matter. Never talk of God's visits to your soul, or of the precious manifestations of the Son of God, if you have never known what it is to "sit in darkness, and in

the shadow of death." For these visits are only designed for such. They are the only characters that a precious Lord in mercy visits. And if we have never been there, all our hope is delusion, all our profession but a name.

But let us look at the words a little more closely. "To such as sit in darkness." What is the darkness here spoken of? Is it merely what I may call moral darkness? natural darkness? No; it is not the darkness of unregeneracy; it is not the darkness of sin and profanity; nor is it the darkness of a mere empty profession. These things are indeed darkness, gross darkness; but those who are thus blinded by the god of this world never sit experimentally in darkness. They are like the Jews of old, who said, "We see; therefore their sin remaineth." 'We dark? we ignorant? we scorn the idea.' Such is the language of empty profession. But the Lord's own quickened, tender-hearted family often painfully know what it is to **sit** in darkness.

But whence does this darkness arise? Strange to say, it arises from light. Darkness as darkness is never seen darkness as darkness is never felt. Light is needed to see darkness; life is required to feel darkness. There are children in Hungary born and bred at the bottom of a mine. Do these children ever know what darkness is, like one who comes down there out of the broad light of day? Were they not told there was a sun above—did not some tidings of the light of day reach their ears, they might live and die ignorant that there was a sun in the heavens. So spiritually. Man, born and bred in the depths of nature's mine, does not know that he is dark; but when divine light enters into his soul, **that** discovers to him his darkness; for it is the light which makes manifest all things; as the Apostle says, "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest by the light" (Eph. 5:13). Thus, it is the

light of God's teaching in a man's conscience that makes him know his darkness; and divine life in his soul makes it felt.

But what does darkness imply? The absence of every thing that brings light and peace into the heart. To have all our evidences beclouded; not to be able to see our signs; unable to trace out the way by which the Lord has led us; unable to realize the existence of the grace of God in our heart; unable to feel the actings of living faith upon the Son of God; unable to cast the anchor of hope within the veil; not to enjoy the inshinings of his gracious presence in the manifestations of his goodness and love—this is darkness. And O, how most, how the vast majority of the people of God thus walk in darkness, and have no light! I may venture to say, that ninety of God's people out of a hundred walk more or less in darkness; and I may venture to say, that the feeling sensations of life, light and peace, compared to deadness and darkness, are nearly in a similar proportion.

But there is one word in the text which conveys to my mind much, that is, "**sitting** in darkness." They are not represented as **standing**; that might imply a mere momentary transition from light to darkness. They are not represented as **running**; that might imply they would soon get out of the darkness. They are not represented as **lying down**; that might lead to suppose they were satisfied with their darkness. But they are represented as **sitting** in darkness. Then surely they are not dead. Nor do they sit at ease and at rest; but are in that posture, because they can neither move backward or forward, nor turn either to the right hand or to the left.

In ancient medals that were struck when Jerusalem was led captive by the Romans, she is represented as sitting on the ground. The same thing is intimated in Ps. 137:1, 2. "By the

rivers of Babylon, there we **sat down**; yea we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."

Sitting was with the ancients the **posture of mourning**. Job "sat down among the ashes;" (Job 2:8); and his friends "sat down with him upon the ground." (Job 2:13) "Her Gates," says Isaiah (Isaiah 3:26), "shall lament and mourn; and she, being desolate, shall sit on the ground."

Sitting implies also a **continuance** in the state; a waiting, a watching, a desiring, a looking out for the light to come.

But again. There is another word added, which throws light upon the character of those who are visited from time to time with "the day-spring from on high." They sit not only in darkness, but **in the shadow of death**. How expressive this word is—"the shadow of death!" There are several ideas, in my mind, connected with the word.

We will look, first, at the idea contained in the expression "**death**." Death with respect to the family of God wears two aspects. There is death **experimental** in their hearts, that is, deadness in their frames; and there is death **temporal**—the separation of soul from the body.

Each of these kinds of death casts at times a gloomy shadow over the souls of God's people. The word is very expressive. They are not sitting in **death**: were they sitting there, they would be dead altogether; but they are sitting **in the shadow of death**. Observe, death has lost its reality to them; it now can only cast a shadow, often a gloomy shadow, over their souls; but there is no substance. The quickening of the Spirit of God in them has destroyed the substance of death spiritually; and the death and

resurrection of Jesus has destroyed the substance of death naturally. Yet, though the gloomy monster, deadness of soul, and that ghastly king of terrors, the death of the body, have been disarmed and destroyed by "Immanuel, God with us;" yet each of them casts at times a gloomy, darkling shadow over the souls of those that fear God. Is not your soul, poor child of God, exercised from time to time with this inward death? Deadness in prayer, deadness in reading the word, deadness in hearing the truth, deadness in desires after the Lord, deadness to every thing holy, spiritual, heavenly, and divine? Do you not feel a torpidity, a numbness, a carnality, a worldliness, that seem at times to freeze up every desire of your soul? I do. O how this cold, clammy monster death seems to wrap its benumbing arms around a man's soul! I have read of a voyager, who, whilst looking for shells on a desert rock, was suddenly caught in the arms of a huge polypus, a sea monster. The sickening sensation produced by this cold and clammy monster clasping him with his huge suckers, and drawing him to his jaws to devour him, he describes as being unutterable, and he was only rescued by the captain's coming to his aid with a knife. I may compare, perhaps, our frequent deadness of soul clasping its arms around every desire of our heart, to the clasping of this poor man in the clammy arms of the sea monster. How it benumbs and paralyzes every breathing of our soul Godward! How all prayer, all panting desire, all languishing affection, all spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, all solid worship, all filial confidence, all the fruits and graces of the Spirit are blighted and withered by the deathliness that we so continually feel! Yet it is but a **shadow**. Write not bitter things against yourself, poor tempted, exercised child of God, because you feel such deathliness and coldness from time to time in your heart. It will not destroy you; nay, it is life in your soul that makes it felt; and the more the life of God has been felt in your conscience, the more painfully the

deathliness of your carnal mind is experienced. Do you expect that your carnal mind will ever be lively in the things of God? What is it but a lump of death, a huge mass of ungodliness, which, like some Behemoth, upheaves its broad flanks continually in the heart? Yet the people of God are very often troubled in their minds by the gloomy shadow that this death casts over their souls. But this trouble is a mark of life. If I were dead, could I feel it! The worst symptom of the dead in sin is, that they do not feel it. But, whilst we feel it, whilst we sigh on account of it, whilst we hate it and hate ourselves on account of it—though it may pain and grieve, it never can destroy. It has lost its substance, though it casts its gloomy shadow.

But there is another death, which though it has lost its substance, casts a gloomy shadow also over many a Godfearing heart; that is, **death naturally**, the severing of body from soul. In seasons of darkness, when our hopes sink to a low ebb; when faith is almost expiring, and love has altogether drooped its head; when the Lord hides himself, and we cannot feel a sweet testimony of interest in his love and blood—what a gloomy shadow does death then cast over the soul! It is feared, it is dreaded; it becomes a king of terrors. And though a believer may have a sense of interest in the love and blood of the Son of God, yet he knows not how it may be with him in that solemn hour.

But do not we sometimes want dying faith before dying moments? And is it the Lord's way to give us a stock of faith in hand? Perhaps we look at death; and our souls shrink within us. We think of the anguish of our poor dying body; we view the sufferings of a sick bed; we reflect on a dear wife and family, of their providential circumstances, and a thousand things to distress and harass the mind; and we have no faith at the time to believe that God will so overrule

and appear in these things, as in these miseries to manifest his mercies. But how is this? Why, we want to have dying comforts before we are brought into dying circumstances; and we want the Lord to favour us with a stock of comfort in hand, that we may live upon it before the time of trial. But it cannot be so. There would be no trial of faith, if it were so. When the souls of God's people come into that dark valley, his rod and staff will comfort them; "and their strength," according to the promise, "will be equal to their day."

Now, it is for those who "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death," that "the day-spring from on high" has come. They are the only persons who need it. How strange, that those who need it not, are the first to claim it; and that those who need it, are the last to believe it for themselves! What a strange mystery is the professing world!—that those for whom all the blessings are designed, whom God loves with an everlasting love, and designs to bring to glory, should be usually the last persons who can lay hold of God's mercy; and that those who have but a name to live while dead, a form of godliness whilst they deny the power, should be the first rashly and daringly to rush in and claim with sacrilegious hands those blessings which belong only to God's poor tempted people! Well might John, Revelation 17:6 when he saw the mystery of the scarlet woman, wonder with great admiration—well might he marvel, to see the true church driven into the wilderness, and the professing church in scarlet raiment, sitting as a queen; and saying, she should "see no sorrow:" But only as we are brought to "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death," does "the day-spring from on high" visit us. And O, how sweet, precious, and suitable, is every dawning of hope, every day-star of mercy, every appearance of the Son of righteousness, to those who "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death!" None others will have it; none others will prize it. Would we then drink of

the sweetness contained in it, we must walk in that dark and dreary path. Would we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, touch with our hands, and taste in our souls the precious consolations of the Son of God, we must be brought to walk in that path of darkness, dreariness, and the shadow of death to which His consolations alone are suited.

2. But there is another word added, another result of the visiting of "the day-spring from on high"—"**to guide our feet into the way of peace.**" The way of peace! Does not that comprehend all? Do those that fear God want anything but peace? What do we want? The way of war, of enmity, of rebellion, of restlessness? No. We want the way of peace.

But what is implied in the expression? Peace implies two things. It implies, first, reconciliation from a state of enmity; and secondly, the felt enjoyment of this reconciliation in the heart. By nature we are at war with God. Our affections are entirely alienated from him. Enmity is the very element, the very breath of our carnal mind. We wander away from him, and far from the way of peace. Now when the Lord first begins to open up to us what **we** are, and what **He** is, and manifests the darkness of our minds, the enmity of our hearts, and the total alienation of our affections from him, he usually kindles in our heart also a desire to be at peace with him. We want to have peace with God; for we know that if we live and die his enemies, eternal perdition must be our portion. And I do believe from what I have felt in the matter, that one of the most cutting sensations of a child of God is, to fear that he is the enemy of God. Oh, where can he hide his guilty head, if he be God's enemy? O what a painful sensation, to think that the hand of God is against him! If so, the very brand of Cain seems set upon him. But when the Lord draws him to his throne, opens his heart, and gives him power to pour forth his soul in earnest breathings, how he

longs to have reconciliation proclaimed, and pardon and peace sweetly enjoyed! Now, this reconciliation between an offended God and offended man could never be brought about but by the mediation of the only-begotten Son of God. The Son of God came forth from the bosom of the Father, where he had lain from all eternity, to reconcile the elect unto God, to lay down his life for them, that he might, by putting away their sins, bring them near to God.

But there is peace to be enjoyed in the soul, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding;" the dying legacy of a dying Lord, "Peace I leave with you; my peace give I unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). A sense of reconciliation, a testimony of favour, a basking in the smiles of a covenant God; a holy calm, a blessed tranquillity, experienced through the application of atoning blood and dying love—is not this the way of peace? But Jesus is the way; for he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Do we wish to walk in the way of peace? We must walk in Jesus; for there is no other way. "He is our peace who hath made both one." "This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian comes into the land." He is the peace-maker and the peace-speaker. But by nature we cannot find the way of peace. It is said expressly, "The way of peace they have not known" (Rom. 3:17). Ignorant, alienated, dark, blind, we cannot, untaught by the Spirit, place our feet in the way of peace. But "the day-spring from on high hath visited us;" the holy, harmless Lamb of God, has died, and offered a propitiation for sin, has fulfilled the law, has brought in everlasting righteousness, has satisfied infinite justice, has reconciled the before apparently jarring attributes of God, and made way for peace and pardon to flow into the hearts of those that fear his name.

But we want **guiding** in the way. And when "the day-spring from on high" visits the soul, it guides the feet into the way. There is something very sweet in the expression. It does not drive, does not force, but opens a door, and enables the soul to enter in; discovers the way, and gives the soul faith to walk in it. Thus it guides the feet of the poor desolate, disconsolate pilgrim by heavenly teachings and divine leadings into the way of peace. It guides him into the knowledge of Jesus, into faith in his blood, into love to his name.

And where there is peace with God, there will be peace with one another. Where the love of God reigns in churches, there will be peace in churches. Where the love of God rules in Christians, there will be peace between Christians. It is our evil heart, our proud spirit, our rebellious nature, the workings of our carnal mind, that bring jealousies, jarrings, and strife. God the Spirit is not the author of confusion; and he only can guide our feet into the way of peace.

And all this flows out of the tender mercy of a covenant God; Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the son, and Jehovah the Spirit, the Three-one God of Israel. Then it excludes all our good doings, nay more, it excludes all our misdoings. It opens a path for the wretched and worthless, for the poor and needy. It opens a way of salvation for the lost, pardon for the guilty, and peace for the weary. Can we expect it to flow into our souls through any other way? What was it that moved the divine Father to send his own Son into the world? Was it not the free mercy of God flowing forth from his bosom to his family? Then, what merit, what claim can his family ever have? Their misery is their claim. Their worthlessness, their sunken state, the depth of their fall—these things call forth God's compassion. It is not what I have done for the glory of God; not what I am doing or trying to do; not my wisdom,

my strength, my resolutions, my piety, my holiness. No; my misery, my helplessness, my worthlessness, my deeply sunken state, my fallen condition; which I feel only because of interest in the blood and love to the Lamb—this it is that makes me need God's mercy; and this it is that qualifies me to go to God through Jesus to receive mercy; for "he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Are you sifting in darkness, and the shadow of death—far from the way of peace, troubled, perplexed, exercised, confused? You are the very characters for whom Jesus came. Are not unutterable mercies locked up in the bosom of God for you? What is to exclude you? Your sins? No; God has pardoned them. Your worthlessness? No; there is a robe of righteousness prepared for you. Your demerits? No; the merits of Jesus are upon your side. Your unholiness? No; He of God is made to your sanctification. Your ignorance? No; He of God is made to your wisdom. These are no barriers. I will tell you what is a barrier self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-exaltation, pride, hypocrisy, presumption; a name to live, a form of godliness, being settled upon your lees, and at ease In Zion—these are barriers. But helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, misery—these are not barriers; they are qualifications; they show, when felt, that your name is in the book of life, that the Lord of life and glory appeared in this world for; and sooner or later, you will have the sweet enjoyment of it in your heart; and then be enabled to adore him for his grace, and bless his name for glorifying his love and mercy in your free and full salvation.