

# THROUGH NIGHT TO MORNING

by

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## SERMON TWELVE -

### THE YOUNG CONVERT'S VISION

**"Whereupon, O King Agrippa. I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision"** (Acts 26:19).

WHEN Paul saw the glorified CHRIST, he asked, **"Who art thou, Lord?"** The question implies much ignorance. Paul does not fully know the glorious Being Who stands before him, but he is certain of one thing, that He is his Master, as the word **"Lord"** implies. There was such a kingly majesty in the face and form of CHRIST that there was no mistaking His lordship. The mighty Saul of Tarsus saw at a glance that he had met the One to Whom he could give his allegiance as King, to rule his life.

And yet Paul in after years did not glory in the glorified CHRIST whom he saw on the Damascus road. He wrote to the Corinthians, **"I am determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified,"** and to the Galatians, **"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Back of the glory which shone above the brightness of the noonday sun he saw a greater glory in the self-sacrificing love of the Son of GOD as manifested in His dying for a lost world. The glory of the cross outshines the glory of the crown. CHRIST wears the Creator's crown, but the Saviour's crown is brighter than the Creator's crown.

The new creation by which man is restored to GOD's image cost GOD immensely more than the old creation by which all worlds were made. By the fiat of His will worlds were created, but it took His heart's blood to save sinners. We have not had the vision of Paul, with the visible light and the audible voice from Heaven, but, if we are Christians, we have had the same kind of vision.

We have, by the eye of faith, seen CHRIST as Lord, and we have acknowledged His supremacy as King in our lives. A study, therefore, of the purpose of this vision gives GOD's purpose in each of our lives. In this purpose there are eight things and in the fulfilment there are three.

May the Spirit of GOD help us to profit by their consideration.

#### I. THE PURPOSE OF THE VISION

The first object of CHRIST in this vision was to make Paul a co-worker with Himself. **"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister."** This word **"minister"** means

an "*under-rower*," one who sat with his fellow-oarsmen in front of the captain of the vessel and took the oarstroke from him. As they all struck with him, they of course struck together, and the boat moved forward with the combined force of their strokes.

CHRIST would make of each one of us an under-rower who takes the stroke from Him in all things:

- We do what He commands.
- We go where He sends.
- We speak what He wishes.
- We will be what He wants us to be.
- His will is our law.
- His pleasure is our joy.

He is to-day seeking the lost, and He would have us seek them with Him. He is shepherding the Lambs, and He wants our co-operation. Is He leading the battle against the powers of darkness? He expects us to take part. Is He opening the doors in Pagan lands for the entrance of missionaries? He expects us to enter and tell the heathen of His love.

The second object of CHRIST in this vision was to make Paul a witness for Him.

**"To make thee a witness of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."** The "**these things**" were great and glorious. There was in them a view of the glorified CHRIST. But Paul was not to be content with "**these things**," however glorious. He was to look for "those things" in which CHRIST was to appear to him again. And many a vision of the CHRIST as Saviour, Helper, Guide, Friend and Deliverer did Paul have in the years that followed.

So while we enjoy "**these things**" which come at conversion in the first vision of CHRIST as Saviour and Lord, we should expect "those things" in which He will appear to us more glorious and precious as the years go by.

In persecutions, in perils of sea and land, in imprisonments and scourgings, Paul had new visions of CHRIST as all-sufficient Saviour and Helper. Let us, therefore, not shrink from the difficult, the dangerous or the painful, if CHRIST wants us to go through them, for He will be with us, and in all "those things" reveal Himself to us in ever-increasing preciousness and glory.

John Bunyan said that he could pray for a darker, damper dungeon, because, as his physical discomforts increased, his spiritual comforts and joys were multiplied. We saw the Matterhorn, the most imposing mountain I have ever seen, from many angles, and every view was sublime, but our best view was from the depths of a deep gorge where we stood among the shadows and looked up at its sun-bathed, majestic height. And our best visions of CHRIST are often from the deep, dark gorge of some great sorrow from which we look up through our tears.

The third object of the vision was to give Paul complete liberty with a view to better service.

**"Delivering thee from the people and from the nations unto whom now I send thee."** Paul

was a Jew and in bondage to Jewish prejudice. His kinsmen according to the flesh were Jews, and he loved them. They honoured him with promotion to membership in the great court of the Sanhedrim. He shared with them their hatred of Christianity and was joining with them in vigorous attempts to destroy it.

Now CHRIST delivers Paul from the Jews, and there is more in that than deliverance from their courts and jails. It means deliverance from their spirit, their sins and their prejudices, as well as from fear of their power or desire for their favour.

Patriotism has its place, though it is to blame for many desolating wars and often fosters a spirit of national selfishness. When patriotism leads us to love our country because it stands for institutions which make for the betterment of the people, it is good; but when patriotism displaces humanity and seeks to enslave the world for the glory of a small part of its population, it is a monstrous evil. Christianity, promoted by the spirit of the "**Son of Man**," is world-wide in its patriotism. It seeks the salvation of all men, regardless of colour, speech and residence. Paul was delivered from the narrow tribal spirit of the Jew, that he might love all alike and work for the salvation of all.

After he was delivered from the Jews and the nations, CHRIST sent him forth with His evangel to them. Here is a principle which may be applied to all spheres. We must be delivered from people before we are ready to preach the gospel to them. You cannot reach the drunkard by drinking with him, nor the swearer by swearing with him, nor the profligate by sinning with him, nor the worldling by playing cards, going to the theatre and dancing with him. After CHRIST has delivered us from our set, then He sends us back to them with the gospel. The drowning man is in no condition to save other drowning men.

The fourth object of the vision was to equip Paul for giving sight to the blind.

**"To open their eyes."** How we pity people who have lost their sight! An audience of blind people, as I have seen them in the chapels of their institutions, is a pathetic spectacle. To be able to restore their sight, that they may see the sun, the flowers, the stars and the faces of their friends, is a gift to be coveted.

But CHRIST sends us on even a higher mission than that. To be blind to GOD and truth and Heaven is worse than to be blind to the sun, the stars and the faces of friends. Soul-blindness is more pitiful than physical blindness. Every Christian is sent forth as a sight restorer. He has a remedy which can open blind eyes toward GOD and truth and Heaven.

The fifth object of the vision was to enable Paul to give light and the love of it.

**"To turn from darkness to light."** Light is no good to us without sight, and sight is no good without light. Our first work is to give sight and then light.

The sixth object of the vision was to enable Paul to turn people from counterfeit light to true light.

**"To turn from the power of Satan unto God,"** Satan in this age is a messenger of light. He

desires that his followers shall be ministers of righteousness. The traditional Devil with horns and forked tail, snorting fire, is not found in the Bible. He is subtle and wily. His mission is to give all sorts of light with the purpose of satisfying men without Him who said, "**I am the light of the world.**" His subtlest wile is seen in his counterfeiting light. Every counterfeit has a basis of reality. If you take a shilling and gild it, you might pass it for a sovereign. It is still worth a shilling. The counterfeit consists in passing it for more than it is worth.

- Morality is a good thing - real light; the wile of the Devil is to gild it with a false value and counterfeit it by passing it for salvation.
- Character is good - real light; the wile of the Devil consists in gilding it with a false value and thus counterfeit it by passing it for salvation without CHRIST.
- Education is good - real light; the wile of the Devil consists in gilding it with a false claim and thus counterfeit it by passing it for salvation.

Our libraries are full of good books, which contain real light; the Devil's wile consists in gilding them with a false value by claiming for them equal inspiration with the Bible and thus counterfeit them by passing them for more than they are worth.

- The ordinances of the Church are good, and carry with them spiritual truth, which is real light; the Devil's wile consists in gilding them with a false value and passing them as a channel or substitute for regeneration.
- The Church is good, a real light in the world; the Devil's wile consists in gilding it with a fictitious importance and thus counterfeit it by claiming Church membership as all that is needed for salvation.

The human Christ stands out the most perfect character in history, filling the world with ethical and intellectual light; the wile of the Devil is in gilding even this perfect CHRIST with a false claim that a human Christ as our example is all we need and thus counterfeit even the human Christ by claiming Him as a Saviour without the offence of the cross.

Even the cross is counterfeited by gilding it with the false claim that it was only an incident in the career of a good man who died a martyr to his mission.

Paul was commissioned to turn men from this counterfeit light, produced by the wiles of Satan, to the true GOD in CHRIST JESUS, and such is the commission GOD gives to the humblest Christian in the world.

The seventh object of the vision was to authorize Paul to offer to all people forgiveness of sins.

**"That they may receive forgiveness of sins."** I heard a foreign missionary say that he never met a pagan who did not have a sense of sin's guilt, though they were often mistaken as to the nature of sin. The whole world lieth in guilt, and it is our glorious mission to tell them that through CHRIST there is forgiveness.

The sin question may be settled and we may get rid of the guilt and pollution of sin with its accompanying lashing conscience and sense of defilement. The greatest day in my life was the day I settled the sin question by getting right with GOD through JESUS CHRIST, and it is my

glorious privilege to tell others how they too may have their greatest day.

It was a privilege for Mr. Moody to take the governor's pardon to a prisoner in the States' prison, and to see his joy when it was announced to him; but a greater privilege it is to take to men, shackled by sin and behind the prison bars of their own evil habits, the forgiveness of GOD, which carries with it liberty and the power to remain free.

The eighth object of the vision was to enable Paul to enrich all who would accept his message.

**"Inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me."** Sanctification carries with it separation from the world with its sin and godlessness. It means giving up everything which GOD does not approve. But is that impoverishment? Far from it; for it means also a separation unto all that is good.

The heir to the throne of England is separated from a good many things, but he is separated unto more. This inheritance is described by the Apostle Peter as **"incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."**

It was Paul's mission to go over the world and offer to everybody through CHRIST the honour, wealth and power which comes with being a child of GOD. No statesman or philanthropist who might have the resources of all the millionaires at his command can so enrich the people as the humble mission worker who offers to them all the riches of grace and glory in CHRIST JESUS.

## II. THE FULFILLMENT

Paul began at once the realization of the vision. He says, **"I showed first unto them in Damascus."**

He began right where he was, in the place where he expected to persecute Christians. Then he went to Jerusalem, then out into Judea, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. If you have accepted CHRIST as Saviour and Lord, begin right where you are to witness for Him. Tell those with whom you have sinned of the Saviour Who has given you sight and light and joy.

Then tell others, till, if possible, you have made the ends of the earth hear your story. They may turn upon you as they did upon Paul, but, if you are faithful, some will receive your witness, and the joy of winning just one soul to CHRIST is a foretaste of Heaven.

In fulfilling this vision Paul insisted upon just three things.

1. Repentance. He showed that they should repent. They must change their minds, which means immensely more than changing their opinions. There must be a change in the whole mental attitude toward sin and GOD. They must take GOD's side against sin and fight sin on the side of God till complete victory is gained.

2. Faith and Allegiance. He showed that they should turn to GOD. Turning from sin is reformation. Turning from sin to CHRIST is regeneration. It is another way of saying, **"Ye must**

**be born again."**

3. Faithfulness. He showed that they must do works meet for repentance. Not works like fruit hung upon a dead tree, as some pagans hang fruit upon trees planted on the graves of their dead. But it must be fruit that grows upon the live tree of a truly penitent, regenerated soul. It means works which flow from repentance and prove that we have repented. It is not works which save us, but works are done because we are saved. Good works are the stream, not the fountain; the fruit, not the tree.

He brought about repentance, turning to GOD and doing works meet for repentance by preaching the death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST.

**"I continue unto this day witnessing to both small and great none other things than Moses and the prophets did say should come, that Christ should suffer and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead and should show light unto the people and to the nations."**

If we would induce men to repent, we must break their hearts with GOD's love, by telling them how CHRIST, GOD manifest in the flesh, died for them and rose from the dead. Thus He became "**light unto the people and to the nations.**" The mere human Christ, however pure, wise and powerful, is not the light of the world.

CHRIST became light for the soul by the sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross. He said, "**I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.**" As the traveller lost in the darkness is drawn towards the light which appears in the distance, so the soul lost in the darkness of sin is drawn towards the uplifted CHRIST.

A look to Him gives even sight to the blind. Do I speak to one who is blind to CHRIST? Will you not turn your face toward Calvary and receive your sight, that from this time on you may walk in the light? Let CHRIST open your eyes, that you may see the beauties and glories of the Spiritual world.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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