

Luke 1:78-79 (Benjamin Curtis Greenman) 53258

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Genesis 1; Luke 1:78, 79

"God said" (in the beginning), "Let there be light: and there was light," when "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Thus were the first rays of light from above let in upon a scene of ruin and disorder and darkness, well suited, indeed, to picture to us what the condition of our souls is as God's eye surveys it, when He is about to bring us "out of darkness into His marvelous light."

But this first light was not to cheer and gladden animated nature, nor to set in order the existing chaos; for of the former there was none in being, and as to the latter it must first be seen as it is - "made manifest"—ere the same mighty word that discovered it, placed all in suited order for Him who is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

And thus, beloved reader, is it as to ourselves, and the ways of that same God with us, and the action of that same word-then in His creative power, and now in the "riches of His grace"! His word comes to convict and test -ere it delivers-to make all "naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," ere giving the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The entrance of it gives light, 'tis true, but it is not joy, but misery-not freedom, but our bondage realized-not peace, but anxious fears-not the faith that gives us to "see Jesus," but to judge ourselves-not looking off unto Him, but looking within-not joy and gladness, because sorrow and sighing have fled away (Isa. 51:11), but "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Isa. 6:5), "Depart from me... O Lord" (Luke 5:8), not God's appreciation of the "sweet savor" of the cross of Jesus (burnt offering), but His holy judgment of our sins (sin offering), that first we learn.

As the patient's need is carefully learned by the skillful physician, so ours must be, ere the healing balm be known. Jesus comes to us where we are, ere He leads us to where He is. He has compassion on us, and teaches us to have compassion on ourselves, ere He binds up our wounds (Luke 10:34) with His precious oil and wine. He must break our hearts about the sins that once bore Him down, ere His hand can bind those broken hearts. Willingly would He spare us, but it cannot be. If chaos is our condition, then it must be realized ere it can be met. If He has come as "light," thus lighting every man, and that "whosoever believeth... should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46), then first it must be told us what the nature of that darkness is; and then we behold "His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). This brings us to the notice of other lights connected with creation and giving the order of His blessed ways with us as with it. "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night;... to give light upon the earth... and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."

Thus beautifully and suggestively is this second and richer giving of the light in God's creation described to us. And surely the lessons (so plainly parallel of what is there given, as to things of earth and time) are near at hand for us, as to things of heaven and eternity. Again, let us notice that His word, in this case as before, introduces these glories of "the heavens," setting them in their place as the blessers and rulers of the scene below. Even so it is with us, as first we learn " 'mid clouds and darkness," by the shining in of the testimony of God, that we are sinners, lost and ruined in His sight, and afterward find the rays of His glory as the Savior-God shining in in grace upon us, bringing peace and blessing. And then, further, we learn that His glory shining is to rule and separate, as well as cheer and gladden. Thus richly does it unfold for us to learn it-the light that searches and discerns, exposes and makes manifest, first entering, where more will follow to set right all that is proven to be not so. This answers to repentance and the judgment of ourselves in humiliation and self-abhorrence, which is the first action of His Word upon us-the working of His Spirit within us. Then the setting above the greater lights to shine down upon the scene where darkness once had reigned, this giving the exaltation before our hearts of the One whom God has set at the right hand of His Majesty in the heavens, meets fully all the stirrings of our consciences, and satisfies all the cravings of our hearts, claiming us thus to live for Him, and separating us to Him.

Manifestly thus lessons of our need and divine blessing are before us-ourselves with "no good thing" dwelling in us, Himself as "altogether lovely," "chiefest among ten thousand."