



I

THE BELIEVER'S PRAYER FOR DIVINE TEACHING

'Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.'

Psalm 119:18

The *law* of God here spoken of is the Bible. In the days of David, the Law, or the Five Books of Moses, formed the greater part of the Bible, and so the whole was often called the Law. So, in the first Psalm, 'His delight is in the law of the LORD.' At verse 97 he says, 'O how love I Thy law, it is my meditation all the day' (Ps. 119:97). And here, 'Open Thou mine eyes,' etc.

The wondrous things seem to be the great things of an eternal world. David had looked on the wonders of this world – he had turned his enquiring eyes upon the wonders of nature, sun, moon, and stars, mountains, trees, and rivers. He had seen many of the wonders of art; but now, he wanted to see the spiritual wonders contained in the Bible. He wanted to know about God Himself in all

His majesty, purity, and grace. He wanted to learn the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, and the glory that is to follow. These were the wondrous things David wanted to see.

'Open mine eyes' – David was not blind – his eye was not dim. He could read the Bible from end to end, and yet he felt that he needed more light. He felt that he needed to see deeper, to have the eyes of his understanding opened. He felt that if he had nothing but his own eyes and natural understanding, he would not discover the wonders which he panted to see. He wanted Divine teaching – the eye-salve of the spirit; and therefore he would not open the Bible without this prayer *'Open Thou mine eyes!'*

I. WE NEED DIVINE TEACHING TO SEE THE WONDERS OF THE BIBLE.

This is plain from the few that are converted under the preaching of the Gospel. *'Many are called but few are chosen,'* has been the rule from the earliest times. If human teaching could reveal the wonders of the Bible, then all who are taught by man would believe; but this is far from being the case. Noah was a preacher of righteousness; alas, with how few did he prevail. Isaiah complains, *'Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?'* In what plaintive strains did Jeremiah preach, and yet he is forced to cry, *'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth.'* And in another place he complains, that there was not one man in the whole of Jerusalem seeking the truth. When our Lord was on earth as a minister, how many thousands heard Him on the mountains of Galilee, and by the seashore, and in the streets of Jerusalem. On the

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last day of the feast He stood and cried when there were thousands present, and yet after He rose from the dead five hundred brethren were all that could be gathered.

When Paul preached at Athens, he stood in the midst of Mars Hill, among thousands of the most acute people that ever were in this world, yet most of them mocked, some put him off to another day; and scarcely more than one man and one woman believed.

So now, many a faithful minister feels the same. There is much preaching, little saving. A godly minister in his lifetime may hold forth the word of life to many thousand souls, yet he may go to his rest with but a few for his crown of joy in the day of the Lord. Think how many faithful ministers there are in the world – how many millions of Bibles read – how many faithful sermons preached – how many teachers – how many children taught the Catechism and the Word of God – how many millions of pious books spreading abroad the truth as it is in Jesus; and yet how few are saved. Oh cry, 'Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law!' (Ps. 119:18)

II. GOD IS THE ONLY EFFECTUAL TEACHER.

1. Because He only knows those wondrous things as they really are. Ministers have but a glimpse of those wondrous things, and it is no wonder they cannot teach them effectually. They see but a very little of sin, the mountains of guilt, the shortness of time, the depth of hell, the love of God. They see but little into the heart of Jesus, His amazing atonement, His free righteousness. It is not once in a hundred sermons that we speak rightly of Christ. Books also are infinitely imperfect. The best of books are but sparks from the Bible, mingled with human darkness.

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– But God knows, ‘all is naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do’ (Heb. 4:13). He knows our sins, the mountains that are over us. He knows the shortness of life. The awful depths of hell are naked to His view. He knows his own love, the glory of Jesus. The Father delights to contemplate Christ, His fullness, freeness, fitness. ‘No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him’ (Matt. 11:27). Do any of you feel your need of divine teaching? Oh, run unto Him; cry, ‘Open Thou mine eyes!’

2. Because He only can teach the heart. Man can speak to the ear, to the understanding, to the memory; God alone to the heart. The reason why human teaching cannot convey light to the soul is that the heart is dead; the natural heart hates God, and everything that comes from God, and therefore, when the truth is presented, the heart draws the mind away from it. But when God teaches, He breaks the heart, and it melts; He awakens concern in the dead heart, so that the person runs to hear the word preached; He awakens desire after Christ, and salvation by Christ; He makes the soul willing to be saved in God's way. None can teach like God. He can teach a little child as easily as the oldest man; nay, He can teach an idiot as easily as the wisest man. Some hearing me have seen this.

Oh, what encouragement is here to little children. Do not think it is above you. What encouragement to poor ignorant creatures, to those who cannot read. Oh, cry to God ‘Open Thou mine eyes!’

III. WHAT IS DIVINE TEACHING?

1. *What it is not.* It is not mere head-knowledge of the Bible. Many have great head-knowledge of the Bible, have

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read it through and through – studied it all. They know the catechism well and have a just notion of systematic Divinity. Some have much book-knowledge, have a relish for the best books; are great judges of sermons; are able to distinguish an evangelical ministry – yet all this may be without a spark of divine teaching. Ah, is there such an one here? What need have you to cry, ‘Open Thou mine eyes!’

It is not a sight of Christ with the bodily eyes. Many saw Him on earth who never were the better for it. Yea, thousands saw Him hanging on the cross, who only wagged their heads at Him in scorn. Every one shall see Him soon, coming in the clouds of heaven, and yet most will only wail because of Him.

Neither is it any vision or fancied revelation of Christ. It is not any impression made on the imagination. Some may fancy they see Christ hanging on the cross, or smiling upon them; they may fancy they see a bright form. This is not the teaching of God; it is infinitely inferior.

Neither is it revealing some truths that are not in the Bible. The wonders which God reveals are all in the Law.

Some may fancy that certain words are borne in upon their mind, as, ‘I have redeemed thee; thou art Mine’ – ‘I have loved thee and died for thee.’ But this is not revealing the wonders out of the Law. This is vastly inferior, and is probably mere delusion.

2. *What it is.* – It is giving the soul a sense of the wondrous excellency of the gospel way of salvation, ‘That I may see wondrous things.’ Before conversion, the man read the same words in the Bible, repeated the same truths in the Catechism, but he saw no wonder in them; now he discovers the wondrous nature of them. A man looking at

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the sun in a mist, may see nothing wonderful; but if the mist be drawn away, and the sun shines out gloriously, the man is filled with a wondrous sense of the glory. So with the glory of Christ, that better Sun. The Man is filled with a wondrous sense of the glory of the person of Christ; He is seen to be 'The Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley.' He is filled with a sense of the wondrous wisdom and peace in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. If there were ten thousand other ways, he prefers *this* to all, giving glory to God, and safety to his soul.

Beloved, have you had this teaching? If you have, bless God for it, 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth.' Pray for more of it. David could not be satisfied.

IV. MARKS OF DIVINE TEACHING.

1. *It causes souls to cleave sweetly to Christ.* – This is the sure mark of all who are taught of God. Before, they were quite puzzled about coming to Christ, believing on Him, closing with Him. But now, they see no difficulties at all; they cannot but believe. Just as one cannot doubt that the sun is shining when they see it, so they cannot doubt the word of Christ, or their interest in Him. They forsake their own righteousness for ever – push themselves aside as condemned, deny themselves, 'count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 3:8). They take up the cross daily; anything that hides Christ they let it go.

2. *It sanctifies.* – Human teaching does not. A man may have the head-knowledge of an angel, and the heart of a devil. Human teaching civilises, it does not christianise. But this sweet teaching of God sanctifies. 'Beholding, as

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in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord' (2 Cor. 3:18). With His stripes we are healed;' and the sanctified one cries, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world' (Gal. 6:14).

3. *It gives desire that others should be taught.* – Not so human teaching. Knowledge puffeth up. A man who has much mere human teaching is proud, and loves to show his superiority; but the heaven-taught soul delights to obey the command of Jesus, 'Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee' (Mark 5:19) and He wishes that all the world would come to know Him who is so sweet, so full, so free. He prays, 'Open Thou their eyes, that they may behold wondrous things out of Thy law!'

So you, dear friends in Jesus, go home and ask, what can I do for Christ? How may I teach by words, by looks, by deeds, 'by righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness?' How may I teach by letters, by books, by tracts? Dark, cold, and powerless in themselves, yet, filled with the Spirit of God, they may convey life, and light and gladness, into thousands of dwellings. The smallest tract may be the stone in David's sling. In the hands of Christ, it may bring down a giant soul.