

THE KINGDOM OF GOD HID FROM THE WISE AND REVEALED UNTO BABES

Mt 11:25

Preached at Romney Street Chapel, Westminster, on Tuesday Evening, 6th July, 1841.

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”- [Mt 11:25](#)

IT is impossible to understand aright many of the expressions that fell from the lips of Jesus when He was tabernacling upon earth, unless we bear in mind who Jesus is. I mean, that many of the words that dropped from His lips, are only to be understood so far as we have some spiritual view of Him as uniting in one glorious person two distinct natures, of His being “Emmanuel, God with us,” God incarnate, God having taken into union with Himself that holy human nature which was begotten of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary. And thus, when we view Christ as a man, and as such the servant of the Father, according to those words, “Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth” [Isa 42:1](#), we can understand some of those expressions which He made use of, which would be utterly inexplicable if we viewed Him simply as God, one with the Father in essence, glory, and power.

It was a part of His covenanted undertaking to become man; as the apostle speaks, “He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” [Php 2:7](#). It was a part of this taking upon Him the form of a servant, to have all the submission of a servant blended with all the reverence and affection of a son. As a servant, too, He covenanted to be exercised with temptations, to undergo sufferings, and by them learn submission, as the apostle speaks [Heb 5:8](#): “Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” So that though He laid not His Godhead by, by taking into union with it our nature, yet in His expressions upon earth, He felt and spoke not so much as God, as man; and therefore, speaking in His covenant relationship as a servant, and yet a son, He uses expressions which could not be very well consistent were He only viewed as God essentially, as the second Person in the glorious Godhead. For instance, He says in the text,

“I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

Such a sentence as that can only be interpreted consistently by viewing it as an expression of Jesus, as the servant of the Father, because, as God, His will is identical with the Father’s will, His power is identical with the Father’s power, for He and His Father are one. And therefore, when He thanks Him for hiding these things from “the wise and prudent”, He speaks not as one who was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, not as one who was one with Him in essence, and one with Him in glory: but He speaks as man, and therefore as man submitting Himself to the righteous dispensations of God, bowing down as a servant to the sovereignty of God, and as such fully pleased and satisfied with all the manifestations of the sovereignty of Jehovah.

The apostle says: “We have the mind of Christ” [1Co 2:16](#). Then if you and I are like-minded with the apostle, we shall be brought at times and seasons to the same spot where Jesus was, when He uttered these words. Divine sovereignty will be to us no harsh, repulsive doctrine; it will not be one from which we recoil with horror; it will not be one against which we fight with enmity; nor one which we shall put away from us as something unintelligible, mysterious, incomprehensible, with which we have nothing to do. But so far as we have the mind of Christ, have the image of Jesus stamped upon us, have the wisdom of Christ made perfect in us, and some experimental knowledge of Jesus by receiving Him into our hearts as our only God and Saviour, we shall be brought by the Spirit of God to the identical spot, where He was as man, and be able to say, at times and seasons, as He was enabled to say: “I Thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

All those, then, that fight against divine sovereignty, that shoot arrows of contempt and hatred against the election of the saints before all time, and predestination of all human events, the particular and personal redemption of the church of God by the blood-shedding of Jesus, and the sure and certain perseverance of the elect to eternal glory-all that fight against these doctrines, and shoot arrows of malicious enmity against them, bear this stamp, that they have not the mind of Christ, that they are not under spiritual teaching, that they are not brought into an acquaintance with “the truth as it is in Jesus”, that they are not led into that path in which the Son of God walked, that they are not treading in the footsteps of Jesus while He tabernacled here upon earth.

We will then, with God's blessing, look this evening at that truth, to which Jesus bowed with every feeling of His soul, before which, as man, He prostrated Himself with all that reverence which dwelt in His human nature, and for which He blessed and praised God, not only as a truth, but also for the manifestation and discovery of it. We will look at the text pretty much as it lies, taking up those points which seem to stand forth in the most prominent light.

I. We find, then, certain characters spoken of in the text, from whom certain truths are hidden, and that by the sovereignty of God, by the special intervention and interposition of Jehovah; not merely hidden in a way of providence, but hidden in a way of direct instrumentality, so that God Himself hides them by throwing a veil over them. There are, then, two characters spoken of in the text from whom divine truth, in its reality, in its power, in its savour, in its sweetness, are mysteriously hidden. One of these characters bears the name of "wise". It is God's glory to pour contempt upon human wisdom, and to bring it to nought, to take the wise in their own craftiness, to lay low in the dust all that man idolizes, that man exalts himself in, and that man loves and adores. If there is one thing in our day more idolized than another, it is the wisdom of the creature. If there is one idol which the world lying in wickedness and the world lying in profession worship more than another always excepting Mammon, the great Bel before whom all fall down and worship, it is creature-wisdom. But this text of Scripture makes a direct stab at the vitals of creature-wisdom; it levels this idol prostrate in the dust; and as Dagon could not stand before the ark of the covenant, so human wisdom must fall prostrate before this declaration from the mouth of the Son of God, and become a stump.

1. But "the wise" in the text seem chiefly to be those who are seeking to become acquainted with divine truth by the exercise of their natural faculties. We are scarcely, I think, to understand by the word "wise" those who are worldly-wise, but those whom we may call religiously wise. As to the worldly-wise they interfere not in these matters; they leave the gospel to itself. It is beneath contempt in their estimation. It is altogether a thing so repulsive to their feeling, that they take no more notice of it than if it did not exist. And therefore the word "wise" here seems to point, not so much at those who are wise in this world's wisdom, but at those who seek to introduce worldly wisdom into the things of God, who seek to bring human reasoning to bear upon God's truth. God, then, has hidden divine realities, in their

manifestation and power, from all who would introduce their fleshly wisdom into the things of God.

There are indeed certain things in religion which human wisdom can attain to. A man by reasoning upon evidences may be persuaded of the truth of revelation; by comparing Scripture with Scripture and bringing forward numerous texts, he may be fully persuaded, in his natural judgment, of the truths of the doctrine of grace. He may see election, predestination and all the doctrines connected with divine sovereignty, clearly revealed in Scripture, so as to give his most unwavering assent and consent to them. He may make many sacrifices in their behalf; he may hear no ministers but those that preach them; he may associate with no persons but those that profess them; he may write books in their defence; he may maintain the strongest arguments from the Word of God that they are true; yet live and die in perfect ignorance of them as made known to his soul by special revelation.

There is nothing which blinds men more effectually to the power of eternal things, than this introducing fleshly wisdom into divine truth; for a man most effectually deceives himself, when he is persuaded in his judgment of the doctrines of grace, and yet lacks that spiritual teaching, whereby those doctrines are brought home with divine unction and savour to his soul. He seems armed with an armour of proof against all the arrows of conviction; for he says, “I am no deceived Arminian; I profess no erroneous sentiments; my judgment is clear; I stand on the basis of truth; I understand perfectly what I hear from the pulpit; I believe most implicitly, that God has a peculiar people; I am fully persuaded that Christ died only for the elect;” and therefore, being compassed in this armour with which he has surrounded himself, not received from God’s armoury, but provided from some human manufactory, he stands like the Leviathan in the book of Job; “He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear” [Job 41:27,29](#); and the arrows of conviction caught by this defensive armour, glance off from him, and never touch or wound his conscience.

2. But we pass on to another character which is spoken of under the name of “prudent”. This seems to be a character distinct from the wise. The prudent man is one who always shapes his course in the path which is most consistent with his worldly interests. “He is not a man of extremes,” he says. He does not like any sort of profession which in any way interferes with his worldly prospects. He is a moderate man. He likes to steer, he says, the middle path between the two parties. He is not, he says, a man of high sentiments, nor is he

a man of low sentiments. He will avoid with the utmost care professing any religious opinion which may bring him into any reproach; and will yet have an especial regard for his moral character, lest by that being tarnished he should suffer in the world's estimation. His object therefore is, to have just so much religion as shall pacify his conscience, just such a profession as shall lull any convictions that may arise, and yet escape the difficulties, trials, and sacrifices, which are the lot of the faithful followers of the Lamb. Thus, with the greatest ingenuity and the greatest caution, like the wriggling serpent, he will steer such a path as shall always preserve him from persecution, opposition, contempt, difficulty, and sacrifice; and yet he shall so keep from everything which may tarnish his character, that he shall gain, he thinks, the estimation of professors and yet preserve the good opinion of the world.

This is your prudent man—a man who says he is no narrow-minded bigot, no harsh judge of others, no exclusive narrow-spirited censor to condemn all who differ from him, but is a man of general philanthropy, of universal charity for all who profess religion, and that wishes to be friendly with all sects and parties, and indeed with everybody who is in any measure separated from the profanity of the day, and wears an aspect of serious religion. Such is a sketch of your prudent man. But he is one from whom God hides His truth. His very prudence is nothing else but the wisdom of the flesh. It springs, for the most part, from Satanic delusion. His very smooth and plausible language is but the outpouring of a worldly heart, and all his gentleness and mildness is, in fact, nothing but an abhorrence of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the preference of self over the esteem of God, and it is the setting up of his own worldly interest and his own worldly character, as an idol to be bowed down to, instead of the cross of the Lord Jesus. With all his prudence, then, in the sight of God he is a fool, for he is destitute of that spiritual wisdom which maketh a man “wise unto salvation”: and however adroitly he may shape his course, however dexterously he may direct his steps, he will find hell at the end. He may manoeuvre most cleverly upon earth, and escape everything that is repulsive to his carnal mind, but there is One whom he cannot escape, there is a judgment which is ripening for him, and the end of all his wisdom is death eternal.

3. But before we go on to consider what the things are that God hides from “the wise and prudent”, we will look at another character spoken of in the text—“the babe”. “Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” There is a character, then, spoken of in the text which is the antipodes, the exact opposite of those which we have been

describing; and yet one to whom the Lord graciously condescends to reveal those things which He hides from them. A babe, spiritually, is one that is brought by the operations of the Spirit of God upon his heart, into that posture, that experience of soul, that frame, of which the natural babe is a living, visible figure. The leading feature in a babe is that of helplessness.

Thus, the spiritual babe that is opposed to “the wise and prudent”, is one, who, by the operations of the Spirit of God, in his heart and conscience, is brought to a state of helplessness before God. “The wise” could understand the truth by employing the powers of his natural intellect. “The prudent” could see how to steer between rocks on the one side, and sandbanks on the other, so as to preserve uninjured the bark that carried the cargo of his own dear reputation. But the babe is helpless in this matter; he has no understanding to make use of to direct him into “the truth as it is in Jesus”; he has no prudence to employ, so to steer as to avoid the shipwreck of his good name; but he stands in divine matters utterly helpless. He feels that he has no power to lift up a little finger to deliver himself “from the wrath to come”-that he has not by nature in his heart an atom of that which is acceptable in God’s sight-that he has no strength to raise up a single spiritual breathing after Jesus, no power to utter a word that God shall listen to with approbation, no wisdom to conceive one thought that shall be pleasing in His eyes. He stands in his feelings often upon the brink of perdition, and is no more able to roll himself away from the precipice that lies underneath him, than a person bound hand and foot by pirates and left on the brink of some sea-washed cliff, would be able to deliver himself from his fearful position, though trembling lest some movement of his body or some gust of wind should in a moment precipitate him into the sea that roars beneath.

But another striking feature of a babe, is that of ignorance. As it lies on its mother’s lap, it is ignorant of the ways of the world, ignorant of the devices of man’s heart, ignorant of every branch of all that knowledge which is necessary to fit it for the station of life which it may hereafter have to occupy. We come into the world ignorant of everything which it is necessary for us to know. Thus the spiritual babe, to carry out the figure, is one who is, at times, so deeply convinced of his own ignorance before God, that it seems to him as though he never knew a single truth aright, as though he were utterly destitute of divine teaching, as though he had not an atom of grace in his soul, as though he had never been spiritually led into the “truth as it is in Jesus,” by the operations of the Holy Ghost upon his heart and conscience. He feels unable to direct himself in any path that lies before his eyes, unable

experimentally to understand any one text of Scripture, unable spiritually to enter into any branch of the truth of God, unable to realise his personal interest in any one of those blessed truths, which are the consolation of the Church of Christ.

But we need not limit the word “babe” to the age of infancy. We read [Mt 21:15](#), of “children crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David”. These could clearly speak and understand, in a measure, if not spiritually, at least naturally, that the Son of David was come into the temple. And yet the Lord calls them babes. “Have ye never read,” says He, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?” Thus taking the babe in the text as applicable to one somewhat advanced beyond infancy, we observe another marked feature in its character-its great teachability, the implicit credence that it gives to those in whose company it is, and who take upon them to instruct it. A babe that is able to understand what you say, will receive with unhesitating confidence whatever falls from your lips. It has no idea that there are such things as lies, or such persons as deceivers; but it believes implicitly everything that is told it.

So with the spiritual babe, he is teachable. Very different from the worldly “wise”, who bring their carnal understandings to bear upon the truths of God: very different from “the prudent”, who can shape their winding course, so as to steer clear of everything that pains the flesh. The spiritual babe is made teachable, and as such, is often crying unto the Lord that He would apply His truth with power to his heart; is seeking wisdom from the lips of Him who alone can communicate it; knowing nothing in self as he ought to know, but seeking to derive all his spiritual knowledge from the mouth of Him into whose lips grace has been poured, earnestly desiring that he may know Jesus as his wisdom, as well as his righteousness.

The apostle says: “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” [1Co 3:18](#). This truth the spiritual babe has learned. He has felt in the hour of temptation, in the season of distress, that all human wisdom falls short of administering that relief, and giving him that support which he longs to feel. He is brought to realise what the Lord speaks in [Isa 28:9](#), “Whom shall He teach knowledge, and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.” He is deeply convinced that unless the Lord Himself speaks by His own lips to his soul, brings truth by His own mighty operation into his heart, and seals His own testimony in his conscience by His

own heavenly power, he continues ignorant of everything which he desires to know. And what the Lord does thus reveal and make known, he implicitly believes. However difficult, strange, and improbable it may seem, he believes it on the Lord's own authority, having a measure of the faith of Abraham, who believed the promise that he should have a son, in spite of reason, sense, and nature.

But it may be asked, how has the babe become possessed of these feelings? What has produced this frame and disposition of soul before God? Not the exertions of his own will surely, nor the strivings of his own creative energy; for a man has just as much power to make himself a babe naturally as a babe spiritually, and could just as easily "enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born", as regenerate himself into a new creature. But his frame of spiritual babeship arises from the Lord's revealing to him that everything in the creature is polluted, that all human wisdom is utterly defective, that nothing will stand in the great day of trial, but that which comes down from God Himself. And, therefore, the babe, being brought to this point in his soul, that there is no righteousness but Christ's righteousness, no wisdom but Christ's wisdom, no teaching but Christ's teaching, no salvation but in Christ's blood, no knowledge but in the application of truth to his soul, is made to feel, that so far only as he is indulged with these things, has he any saving acquaintance with "the truth as it is in Jesus".

II. But we pass on to consider, what are the things that God hides from the one character, and makes known to the other.

1. The workings of godly fear in the soul, is a branch of divine truth which the Lord hides from "the wise and prudent", and reveals unto babes. Whatever religious knowledge, or whatever carnal wisdom, or whatever worldly prudence a man may be possessed of, if he is devoid of the life of God in his soul, he is destitute of the workings of godly fear, he has no solemn awe or reverence for Jehovah, he has never seen his sins in the light of God's countenance, he has never trembled at "the wrath to come", he has never prostrated himself with a reverential spirit before the eyes of a heart-searching Jehovah, that sees into the secret recesses of his bosom. But all his knowledge, and all his wisdom, and all his prudence, leave him just where they found him, unimpressed, carnal, sensual, worldly, "dead in trespasses and sins". All his wisdom never reached beyond the surface: it never broke up the crust of unbelief, so as to enter through that seared crust into the conscience, and produce living effects in it, as made tender by the touch of

God's finger. But his knowledge, his wisdom, his prudence, are all floating in his judgment, and never descend into the depths of his heart.

God hides, then, the workings of spiritual fear from those who are "wise and prudent". He does not condescend to manifest Himself to them: He does not show them light in His light: He does not reveal Himself to their consciences: He does not come with power into their hearts; He does not take the veil of unbelief and blindness from their carnal minds, and show them Himself; He takes them not where He took Moses, into the cleft of the rock, "where His glory passed by"; He deals not with them as He dealt with Isaiah, when He manifested to him the glory of the Lord in the temple; He discovers Himself not to them as He did to Job, when "he abhorred himself in dust and ashes". All their knowledge of God therefore, is an external, intellectual knowledge, a mere exercise of the faculties of the mind, without any spiritual teaching, or any special revelation of the presence, power, glory, and majesty of God to their consciences.

But the babe-the living babe in Zion has "the fear of the Lord" in his soul "as the beginning of wisdom". And therefore, having this fountain of life within, he has it springing up in spiritual exercises. As the apostle speaks, "He serves God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;" he dares not rush with presumption into His holy presence. When he comes into His sanctuary a solemn dread from time to time falls upon his spirit. He has the feelings of Isaiah [Isa 6:5](#) when he cried: "I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" the feelings of Jacob when he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place!" [Ge 28:17](#); the feelings of Moses when he stood by the burning bush, and put his shoes from off his feet, for the spot whereon he stood was holy ground: the feelings of the high priest in the temple on that mysterious day of atonement, when he entered alone, "not without blood", into the sanctuary, the holy of holies, and beheld the Shechinah-the divine presence as a cloud resting on the mercy-seat.

The babe, then, has these exercises of godly fear which carnal, unhumbled, worldly-wise professors know nothing of. And though the babe, at times, seems to have no religion which he can really call spiritual or which satisfies himself, yet he has that tenderness, awe, and reverence which the carnal professor, however high in doctrine, however soaring in vain confidence, is utterly unacquainted with.

2. But again; God hides from “the wise and prudent” a spiritual acquaintance with His law. They may have natural convictions I believe many of them have; they may see naturally that God is pure and holy; but they have no acquaintance in their consciences with the spirituality and depth of God’s law in the hands of the Spirit, as a ministration of condemnation. If they had, it would have broken into pieces their fleshly wisdom. The hammer of God would have crushed into nothingness the prudence whereby they were endeavouring to shape their course. But the babe has a spiritual acquaintance with the depth and breadth and height of God’s holy law, and this being in his conscience the ministration of condemnation, makes him cry: “Guilty, guilty; unclean, unclean; undone, undone; God be merciful unto me a sinner.”

3. But again; the operations and exercises of living faith in a tender conscience are hidden from “the wise and prudent”. All that they know, they “know” as Jude speaks, “naturally”, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, by the adjusting of different texts, and endeavouring to gather a light from bringing together passage with passage. They know nothing of the operations of living faith, whereby truth is received in power, in feeling, in divine application, in spiritual revelation; and thus being devoid of living faith, there are no exercises in their souls upon the perfections of God; no access as spiritual worshippers; no entrance into the mysteries of the gospel, in their sweetness and reality; no self-abhorrence and self-loathing, as the “chief of sinners”, and “less than the least of all saints”; no going forth in soul towards Jesus with earnest cries, breathings, longings, and desires to feel the efficacy of His atoning blood, the manifestations of His glorious righteousness, and the discovery of His all-absorbing presence. But they mistake light in the head for life in the heart, doctrines in the brain for the feeling application of truth to the conscience, the reception of what God has spoken in His Word into the intellect for the spiritual discovery of “the truth as it is in Jesus,” with power to the soul.

4. But further; God hides from “the wise and prudent” the exercise of a living hope. They know nothing of “the anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil”. Their hope is the hope of the hypocrite, which is to perish [Job 8:13](#). It is the spider’s web spun from their own bowels; “they shall lean upon it, but it shall not endure”, as Bildad speaks in Job [Job 8:15](#), for it is like the rush that has grown out of the mire, and like the flag that groweth up out of the water. But a good hope through grace; hope, that sister-grace with faith and love, that hope which is “the helmet of salvation” to cover the head in the day of battle, that hope of

which the possessors shall never be ashamed, that spiritual hope in the soul which is raised up by the “God of hope”, and by which we are saved for “we are saved by hope”-of that spiritual hope the wise and worldly-prudent are utterly ignorant. They know nothing of storms, waves, tempests, gusts, shoals, sand-banks and rocks, and therefore they want not an anchor. The anchor is not a useless implement, taken on shipboard for show like a figure-head, to be looked at and gazed upon as an ornament, but it is for use; and its use is, to keep the ship from being driven upon shoals and sand-banks, to preserve it from being utterly cast away. He, then, that is never exercised with doubts, fears, temptations, difficulties, gusts, storms, and tempests; who is never tossed upon the waves, nor driven by the billows, can know nothing of what it is to have an “anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and that entereth into that which is within the veil”.

5. Again; God hides the breathing forth of spiritual affections and the pouring out of divine love from “the wise and prudent,” which He reveals unto babes. The parent loves the babe. The mother will bow down over her infant as it lies on her lap, and with the fondest tenderness will imprint soft kisses upon its cheek, out of the love that springs up in her bosom toward it. The very prattlings and little actions of the babe are sweet in her eyes, because it is her offspring. She bestows not that love upon others; it is the babe, the fruit of her own womb, that she loves. So the God of all grace, the Father of His dear family, never bestows His love upon any but the elect; He never sheds abroad heavenly affections in any but hearts which He is preparing for glory; He never gives a foretaste of heavenly bliss, or the dewdrops of eternal consolation, except to those whom He has loved in Christ before all worlds. Never did His love-no, not a drop of it-fall into the heart of “the wise and prudent”.

God beholdeth the proud afar off, and “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;” but into the heart of the helpless, ignorant, teachable babe, that lies at His feet in brokenness, contrition, simplicity, humility, and godly sorrow, He drops His love, because, being its Father, He loves it with a love that reaches from eternity to eternity, a love that knows no beginning and will never know end, a love that runs in one undeviating channel, that embraces all the elect, a love that knows neither height nor depth, bottom nor shore. He reveals, then, His love in a measure to the babes, by communicating out of His loving bosom some drops of that love into their heart; and when that love is communicated it makes them love in return.

6. But again; He hides from “the wise and prudent” all the savour, and unction, and dew, and sweetness, and power of truth. He gives them the letter. When He has cracked the nut for His child, He throws the shell into the street, and the worldly-wise pick up the broken nutshell out of the gutter, and are wonderfully pleased with it. All they can see is the shell of truth; but the marrow, the fatness, the sweet enjoyment, the blessed revelation, the honey, the milk, and the wine of gospel truth-these things God hides from them; and it is this which distinguishes the living from the dead, that the living have a measure of power in their hearts.

Dew, and savour, and fragrance, and divine sweetness, and heavenly power accompany truth to the hearts of the elect, so that the teaching of God drops like the rain, and His speech distils like the dew. He leadeth them into green pastures, and causeth them to lie down by still waters. He says, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;” “I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse.” And when He comes into His garden He brings with Him milk, and honey, and wine, so that the babe is fed by the milk of the gospel. “As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.” And it is the power of truth felt in the conscience, and the sweet application of divine testimonies received into the heart, that nurture up the spiritual babe until he grows up into “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”.

7. But again; the diversified and chequered path of a Christian -the ins and outs of the divine life, the liftings up and castings down, the bitter exercises and sweet deliverances, the scenes of darkness and glimpses of light, the cries and groanings of the troubled spirit, and the lifting up of “the light of God’s countenance”-this chequered path, this varied scene, is hid from “the wise and prudent”. They know nothing of distress, and nothing of joy; nothing of war, and nothing of peace; nothing of despair, and nothing of hope; nothing of sinking, and nothing of rising; nothing of frowns, and nothing of smiles; nothing of long seasons of darkness, and nothing of blessed gleamings forth of light. God hides these things from them -a veil is upon their hearts. The Lord has, as He speaks of the Jews, “blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, lest they should be converted, and He should heal them”; and “therefore wrath is come upon them to the uttermost”. But to the babe He condescends, in a measure, to reveal those things; and through them Christ becomes his food, and soul-satisfying portion.

Thus the babe will ever stand distinguished from the “wise” and the worldly “prudent”. The “wise” may seem to know more than the babe; but, in fact, he knows far less, for he knows nothing by divine teaching. What the babe knows, he knows savingly. The wise may seem stronger than the babe, because he has a greater acquaintance with the Scriptures of truth; but in reality the babe is far stronger than he, for the strength of Christ is made perfect in his weakness; whereas “the mighty man shall not glory in his might”, for “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong”; but some temptation shall come upon him to thrust him effectually down. The carnally wise professor may seem to have a stronger hope, a firmer faith, a brighter evidence, a clearer testimony than the babe; but what is it all? It only stands in the letter of truth, it does not stand in the application of the Holy Ghost; it is not a part of that kingdom of God which is “not in word but in power”; it does not stand in the Spirit’s testimony; it is not the religion that Paul describes when he says, “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

God is said to reveal them unto babes-that is, He makes them spiritually known, He casts a mysterious light upon them, He communicates life out of them, He brings feeling with them, He sends them home with spiritual power, He testifies by the Spirit’s application, and seals them upon the heart in a way of divine manifestation. And thus the things He hides from the “wise and prudent” He reveals unto babes.

Can you see your character traced out, friends? Your character is here, whether you know it or not. Here is your mirror; if the vail is over your heart you may not be able to see your features in it, but here the mirror is, if you can read your features. If you are a professor of vital godliness, you are one of these characters-the worldly wise, the prudent, or the babe. I have endeavoured, as far as the Lord has shown me, to delineate your features. Is there a resemblance? Now, if you have a conscience, you will fall under the power of truth-you will say, “I fear I have too much worldly wisdom, and too little spiritual teaching. Looking back upon my life, casting my eyes upon my daily transactions, I see there is much more worldly prudence stamped upon them than spiritual simplicity. Weighing myself up in the strict balance of God’s Word, I see much that condemns me, I see little that seems really to testify in my favour.” Such will be the voice of conscience, for the babe has a conscience, and it is an essential part of the Spirit’s work to give him a conscience, whereby he falls under the power of truth.

But some shall say, “I am so possessed with a feeling of my helplessness, my ignorance, my nothingness, my sinfulness, and deep pollution, and, at the same time, the Lord seems to have done so little for me, and to have revealed so little of the sweetness and power of truth in my soul, that I fear I am out of the secret altogether.” Has the Lord made your heart in any measure honest before Him? Has He planted in your soul anything like godly fear, so as to bring you into His presence with feelings of solemn reverence? Has He shown to you how short of salvation everything is but His own blessed teachings and His own divine manifestations in your soul? And has He kindled in your heart, at times, an earnest “spirit of grace and of supplications,” whereby you are crying unto Him to lead you and to guide you into all truth? Now these are symptoms of life. Whilst I would wish to pull down “the mighty from their seats”, I would seek to exalt “the humble and weak”. I would not wish to distress any tender conscience, any living soul, not even the weakest of God’s family, but I could not discharge my conscience unless I took the precious from the vile, and drew a line of distinction between the clean and the unclean, though I know that none but God can make His own word effectual to the separation of the professor from the possessor, and set apart spiritual children from those that are “at ease in Zion”.