

HELPS NO. 777

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“And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”
1 Corinthians 12:28.

IT appears, according to the Apostle Paul, in regard to the diversity of gifts which proceeded from the selfsame Spirit of God, those who gave assistance to the early Church did so in different ways. He tells us, “God has set some in the church, first apostles.” These were to go from place to place founding churches and ordaining ministers. There were next, “secondarily, prophets,” some of whom uttered prophecies and others were gifted in their explanation. Then came, “thirdly, teachers,” who were probably either pastors settled in many churches teaching the Word, or else evangelists journeying about and proclaiming the Truths of God.

Then came, “after that, miracles, then gifts of healing.” And the Apostle does not forget to mention another class of persons, called “helps.” Now, who these people precisely were I suppose it would be very difficult, at this period of time, if not quite impossible, to tell. Some have thought that they were assistant ministers who occasionally aided settled pastors both in the pastoral work of visiting and in occasionally preaching the Word. Others have thought that they were assistant deacons, and perhaps even deaconesses, an office that most certainly was recognized in the Apostolic Churches.

Others, again, have supposed these “helps” to have been attendants in the sanctuary who took care that strangers were properly accommodated, and managed those details which always must be superintended by somebody in connection with any gathering of persons for any public object whatever. But whoever they were, or whatever may have been the particular functions they discharged, they appear to have been a useful body of people and worthy to be mentioned in the same verse as Apostles and teachers, and even to be named with miracle-workers and those who had the gifts of healing!

It strikes me that they were not persons who had any *official* standing but that they were only moved by the natural impulse and the Divine life within them to do anything and everything which would assist either teacher, pastor, or deacon in the work of the Lord. They were the sort of Brethren who are useful anywhere—who can always stop a gap and who are only too glad, when they find that they can make themselves serviceable to the Church of God in any capacity whatever. We have a goodly brigade of “HELPS” in this Church, and I want now to stir them up! And while I am speaking to them, perhaps a word or two of comfort may come, as it were, from round the corner to some who need the assistance which these Brethren give, and for whose help, indeed, those of whom we speak lay out their lives.

John Bunyan, that master of Christian experience, as well as of Christian allegory, has, it seems to me, described that part of the work of these “helps” which is most valuable and which is most required. He describes Help as coming to Christian when he was floundering about in the Slough of Despond. Just when the poor man was likely to have been choked, having missed his footing in the slough, and when he found that with all his struggling, he was only sinking deeper and deeper into the mire, there suddenly came to him a person of whom Bunyan says nothing more throughout his whole allegory, whose name was Help. Help put out his hand and, saying some words of encouragement to Christian, pulled him out of the mire, set him on the King’s Highway and established his goings.

There is a period in the Divine life when the help of judicious Christian Brethren is invaluable. Most of us who know the Lord at all know quite as much as we wish to know about that awful Slough of Despond. I myself did lay in it for five years, or thereabouts, and I think I know pretty well every part of it. In some places it is deeper than in others, and more nauseous. But, believe me, a man may reckon himself thrice happy when he gets out of it, for when one is in it, it seems as though it would swallow him up alive! Dear, very dear to us, must ever be the hand that helped us out of the depth of the mire where there was no standing! And while we ascribe all the glory to the God of Grace, we cannot but love most affectionately the instrument He sent to be the means of our deliverance.

On the summit of some of the Swiss passes, the Canton, for the preservation and accommodation of travelers, maintains a small body of men, sometimes only two or three, who live in a little house at the top and whose business it is to help travelers on their way. It was very pleasant when we were going through a pass in the mountains of Northern Italy to see, some three or four miles from the top, a man coming down who saluted us as though he had known us for years. He carried a spade in his hand, and though *we* did not know what was coming, he evidently understood better than we did what was going to occur.

By-and-by we came to deep snow and the man went to work with his spade to clear a footway, and when he came to a very ugly piece of road some of the party were carried along on the man's back. It was the man's business to care for the travelers and before long there came one of his companions with wine and refreshments which were generously offered to the weary ones. These men were "helps" who spent their lives on that part of the road where it was known their services would be required. And when travelers reach the spot, these men are ready to give their assistance in the nick of time. They would have been worth nothing at all down in the plains. They would have been only an encumbrance if they had met us in any other place—but they were exceedingly valuable because they were just where they were required—and came exactly at the moment when they were wanted.

Now, my Friends, "helps" are of no use to a man when he can help himself. When he has no difficulties, an offer of assistance is an intrusion. There is just one point, such a juncture as the passing of the summit of the mountain, where help will be exceedingly precious to him. And it seems to me that the period of a man's experience which Bunyan describes by the Slough of Despond is just that season when you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may render invaluable aid to the Christian minister by coming to the rescue of those who seem as though they would be swallowed up.

This brigade of "helps," if I understand Bunyan right, are stationed all round the borders of the Slough of Despond and it is their business to keep watch all round and listen for the cries of any poor unenlightened travelers who may be staggering in the mire. Just as the Royal Humane Society keep their men along the borders of the lakes in the parks in winter time—and when the ice is forming bid them be on the watch and take care of any who may venture upon it—so a little knot of Christian people, both men and women, should always be ready in every Church to listen for cries of distress, and to give assistance wherever it may be required.

Such seem to me to be the sort of "helps" we want. Such, perhaps, these ancient "helps" may have been.

I. I want, first of all, to GIVE A FEW DIRECTIONS TO THESE "HELPS" AS TO HOW THEY MAY HELP POOR SINNERS OUT OF THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND. After some little experience I have had in helping others, I would recommend one particular course at the outset. When you meet with someone who is despairing and thinks he cannot be saved, get him to state his case. This should always be the *first* thing.

When Help went to Christian he did not at once put out his hand to him, but he said, "What are you doing there? How did you get there?" It does men good to state their spiritual case to others. Confession to a priest is a piece of abomination, but sometimes the communication of our spiritual difficulties to another will be, in itself, a most helpful exercise to ourselves. You will know how to deal with them and they will know the better what you want when they put their necessities into words. I have occasionally found that the mere act of stating a difficulty has been the very means of at once removing it.

Some of our doubts will not bear the light of day. Many spiritual difficulties are there which, if a man did but look them fully and squarely in the face long enough to be able to describe them, would vanish even during the investigation! Let the youngster state his case. Get that young man alone, dear Brother—get him to sit down quietly with you, and say to him—"Now, what is it you are distressed about? What is the point that puzzles you? What cannot you understand? What is it that dejects and dispirits you?" Let them state their own case.

Next to this, enter, as much as lies in you, *into* their case. This may seem to you, perhaps, an unimportant direction, but, depend upon it, you will be able to give very little help, if any, if you do not follow it. Sympathy has very much to do with our ability to comfort others. If you cannot enter into their distress, you will scarcely be able to lift them out of it. Try to bring yourselves down to "weep with them that weep," as well as to "rejoice with those that rejoice." Do not sneer at a difficulty because it seems small to you. Remember that it may be very great to the person who is troubled by it.

Do not begin to scold and tell the young man that he ought not to feel as he does feel, or to be as distressed as he is. As God puts His everlasting arms underneath *you*, so you must put the outstretched arms of your sympathy underneath

your younger and weaker Brethren that you may lift them up. If you see a Brother in the mire, put your arms right down into the mud, that, by the Grace of God, you may lift him bodily out of it! Remember that you were once just where that young Sister of yours is now. Try, if you can, to bring back your own feelings when you were in her condition.

It may be, you say, that the stripling or the damsel is very foolish. Yes, but you were fools yourselves once, and then you abhorred all manner of meat and your soul seemed to be drawing near to the gates of death. Now you must use Paul's language—you must “become a fool for their sakes.” You must put yourselves into the condition of these simple-minded ones. If you cannot do this, you need training to teach you how to be a help—as yet you do not know the way. Let them state their case and then endeavor to feel their difficulties as your own.

Perhaps your next work ought to be to comfort these poor Brethren with the promise. Help, in “Pilgrim's Progress,” asked Christian why he did not look for the steps and told him that there were good steps all the way through the mire. But Christian said he had missed them. Now, you can point these poor sinking ones to the steps, Brethren, if you are well acquainted with the *promises of God*. Have them on the tip of your tongue, ready at any time. We have heard of a certain scholar who used to carry miniature copies of all the classic authors about with him so that he seemed to have almost a Bodleian in his pocket.

O that you would carry miniature Bibles about with you! Or, better still, that you had all the Word of God constantly with you in your *heart* so that you might be able to speak a word in season to them that are weary! Whenever you come across a poor distressed soul, what a blessed thing for you to be able to say to him, “Yes, you are a sinner, it is true. But Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” Perhaps he will tell you that he cannot do anything—and you may answer that he is not told to do anything but to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ and he shall be saved. He will say, perhaps, that he cannot believe—but you can remind him of the promise, “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”—that is, those who seek Him earnestly by prayer.

Some texts in the Bible are like sundry stars in the sky—those constellations in the heavens which are so conspicuous that when the mariner once sees them he can very soon tell where he is! He determines the latitude and longitude of his own position by gazing intently on one of these celestial bodies. Some brilliant passages of Scripture appear to be set in the firmament of Revelation as guiding stars to poor bewildered souls. Point to these! Quote them often! Rivet the poor sinner's eyes upon them—this will be one of the best ways of helping him. Oh, if there is a poor despairing one here to-night, let me quote to him three great and mighty promises of our God—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” “He retains not His anger forever because He delights in mercy.” “Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” These three texts are specimens of promises by which you “helps” can assist sinking sinners.

After this, dear Friends, try to instruct those who may want your help more fully in the plan of salvation. The Gospel is preached every Sunday in hundreds of pulpits in England, and yet there is nothing so little known or understood in this country as “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Sometimes the preacher cannot, even with all his attempts, make plain the simple Gospel. You, perhaps, may be able to do it because you just happen to suit the comprehension of the person in hand. God is my witness how earnestly I always endeavor to make clear and plain whatever I say, but yet my peculiar modes of thought and expression may not be suitable to the cases of some in such an audience as this.

Some one person may be able to meet cases which I cannot. If my Brothers and Sisters, the “helps,” will be constantly active, they may often *explain* where *I* only confuse. That which may not have been understood as the preacher put it may be comprehended when it is stated afresh by them. If you will only put the same thing in another shape, the sinner will say, “Ah, I see it now. I could not understand it from him, but I can understand it from you!” Do, if you would help souls, point them to the Savior! Do not bother them about any irrelevant matters, but just talk to them at once about the precious blood—that is the main thing. Tell the sinner that whoever trusts in Christ shall be saved. Do not point to the wicket gate as Evangelist did—that is not the way! Point the sinner to the Cross!

Poor Christian would never have been in the Slough of Despond if he had had a proper person to direct him. Do not scold Evangelist, but just undo the mischief he did by always pointing the sinner to Calvary. Would you supplement this? I recommend you to tell the troubled conscience your own experience. Many have been able to get out of the Slough of Despond in this way. “What,” says the young man, “did you ever feel as I do?” I must say I have often been really amused when I have been talking with young enquirers to see them open their eyes with astonishment to think that I had ever felt

as they did, whereas I should have opened mine with far greater astonishment if I had not! We sit down, sometimes, and tell our patients all their symptoms. And then they think we must have read their hearts, while the fact is that our hearts are just like theirs, and in reading ourselves, we read them.

We have gone along the same road as they have, and it would be a very hard thing if we could not describe what we have ourselves experienced. Even advanced Christians find great comfort in reading and hearing of the experience of others if it is anything like their own. And to young people it really is a most blessed means of Divine Grace to hear others tell what they have gone through before them. I wish our elder Brethren were more frequently “helps” in this matter, and that when they see others in trouble they would tell them that they have passed through the very same difficulties, instead, as some do, of blaming the young people for not knowing what they cannot know, and upbraiding them because they have not “old heads on young shoulders,” where, I am sure, they would be singularly out of place.

Once more, I think you will very much help the young enquirer by *praying* with him. Oh, the power of prayer! When you cannot tell the sinner what you want to say you can sometimes tell it to God in the sinner’s hearing. There is a way of saying in prayer, with a person, what you cannot say directly to his face and it is well, sometimes, when praying with another, to put the case very plainly and earnestly—something in this way: “Lord, You know that this poor young woman now present is very much troubled, but it is her own fault. She will not believe in Your love because she says there is no evidence of it. You have shown it in the gift of Your dear Son but she still persists in wanting to see something of her own upon which she may rest—some good frames or feelings. She has been told many times that all her help lies in Christ and not at all in herself, and yet she still keeps on seeking fire in the midst of water and life in the graves of death. Open her eyes, Lord! Turn her face in the right direction and lead her to look to Christ, and not to self.”

Praying in this way, you see, often puts the case very plainly. There is a real power in prayer—the Lord still hears the cry of His people. As certainly, Beloved, as ever the electric fluid bears the message from one place to another—as certainly as the laws of gravitation move the spheres—so certainly is prayer a mysterious, but a real power! God *does* hear prayer! Some of us are quite as certain of this as we are that we breathe—we have tried it and proved it. It is not *occasionally* that God has heard it, but it has become as regular a thing with us to ask and have as it is for our children to ask for meat at the table and receive it at our hands.

I should hardly think of attempting to *prove* that God hears my prayer, either to myself or anybody else. It has become so much the habit of my life to know that God hears prayer that I have no more doubt of it than I have of the fact that if I lose my balance I shall fall, and that the power of gravitation affects me in walking, in sitting still, in rising up, and in lying down. Exercise, then, I beseech you, this power of prayer and you shall often find that when nothing else will help a soul out of its difficulty, prayer will do it. There are no limits, dear Friends, if God is with you, in your helping others through the power of prayer.

These directions—and they are not very many—I want you to keep in your memories as you would the directions of the Royal Humane Society with reference to people who have been in danger of drowning. I dare say some of you have already practiced them so long that you know them well enough.

II. Having spoken thus on how to help, I shall now describe THOSE WHO CAN HELP. It is not everybody who can help in the way I have been describing. I want to enlist a little brigade of spiritual firemen—that is, I want to gather a company of “helps” to assist persons who may be slipping and floundering about in the Slough of Despond.

The first essential for a true “help” is that he should have a *tender heart*. There are some people who seem to be prepared by Divine Grace on purpose to be soul-winners. I know a Brother whom I did once venture to compare to a hunting dog in this matter, for no sooner did he suspect that there were anxious souls than he was on the alert! And did he but *hear* of a number of converts, away he went! He seems dull and heavy at other times, but then his eyes flash, his heart, his whole soul is stirred up to action and he becomes like a new man! Among converts and enquirers he is all alive—his soul takes fire directly—and amidst the diversities of gifts that proceed from the same Spirit, his gift evidently is to help souls.

Such a man was Timothy, of whom Paul says, “I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state.” You know in common life there are some people who seem to be born nurses. Others there are, to be sure, who cannot nurse at all! If you were ill you would never have them about you even if they would come for nothing and pay *you* for having them! They mean well, but somehow or other they would stomp across the room every time they moved and

would be sure to wake you up! And if there were any medicine to be taken at night it would taste all the worse if they gave it to you. But you have known a real nurse—perhaps your own wife—you never did hear *her* walk across the room when you were ill and you never would, even if you had an instrument to your ear like a microscope to the eye magnifying the minutest thing! She steps so softly that you might almost sooner hear her heartbeat than her footstep.

Then, too, she understands your tastes exactly and always knows what to bring you. Whoever heard of a nurse more fit for her work than Miss Nightingale? She seems as if she could do nothing else, and as if God had sent her into the world on purpose—not only that she might be a nurse, herself—but that she might also teach others to nurse. Well, it is just the same in *spiritual* things. I have used a homely illustration to show you what I mean.

There are some people who, if they try to comfort you when you are distressed, go so awkwardly to work about it that they are sure to give you a great deal more trouble than you had before. They really *mean* well, and try to do their best, but they cannot do what you want done. It is not their skill—they are not “helps”—they would take a great crowbar to do the thing which a little picklock would easily effect. And they go about everything in such a strange, clumsy style that you can see they were not made for the work. The true “help” to a distressed soul is a person, who, though his head may not be very big, has a large and warm heart. He is a man, in fact, all heart.

It was said of John that he was a pillar of fire from head to foot. This is the kind of man the soul wants when it is shivering in the cold winter of despondency. Such men I know—may God train many more and give us all more of the gentleness that was in Christ—for unless in this way we are naturally fit for the work, we shall never be able to do it. The “help,” moreover, needs not only a large heart, but a very *quick eye*. There is a way of getting the eye sensitively acute with regard to sinners. I know some Brothers and Sisters who, when they are sitting in their pews, can almost tell how the Word is operating upon those who sit near them.

Some people cannot do this, others can. And besides this they know just what they ought to say to their neighbors in the seat when the sermon is over. They understand *how* to say it and whether they ought to say it in the pew or going down stairs, or outside—or whether they ought to wait till some time in the week. They appear to have an instinct which tells them just *what* to do, *how* to do it, and *when* to do it. Oh, it is a blessed thing when God thus sets watchmen along the borders of the Slough of Despond! Then, if they have quick ears, they listen, and by-and-by they hear a splash over yonder in the Slough, and though it may be very dark and misty, they go to the rescue! Nobody else hears the cry but those who lay themselves out to listen for it.

We also need for this work men who are quick of foot, to run. Why, there are some of you who never speak to your neighbors about their souls! You have a sitting here and you never think of speaking a word to those who sit next to you. I thank God there are some of you who will not let a stranger go out without a good word concerning Christ. I pray you persevere in the good habit and the Lord will bless you, for while there is much to be done in such a congregation as this by the preacher, there is yet *more* to be done by these “helps” in getting to the conscience and doing good to the soul.

For a thoroughly efficient “help,” give me a man with a loving face. We do not make our own faces, but I do not think a Brother who is habitually grim will do much with anxious enquirers. Cheerfulness commends itself, especially to a troubled heart. We do not want levity—there is a great difference between cheerfulness and levity. I can always tell a man who looks sweetly at me what I feel, far better than I can tell it to one who in a sort of official way talks to me as though it were his only business to enquire into my private concerns and to find out all about what I am and where I have been.

Go about your work softly, gently, affectionately. Let your cheerful countenance tell that the religion you have is worth having—that it cheers and comforts you—and then the poor soul in the Slough of Despond will hope that it may cheer and comfort him. Earnestly, too, let me recommend you to have a firm foot. If I have to go and pull a Brother out of the Slough, I must know how to stand fast, myself, or otherwise, while I am seeking to pull him out, I may fall in! I must remember that hearing the doubts of others may give rise to the same doubts in my own mind unless I am firmly established as to my own personal interest in Christ Jesus.

If you would be useful, you must not be always doubting and fearing. Full assurance is not necessary to salvation, but it is very necessary to your success as a helper of others. I remember when I taught in the Sunday school, I was trying to point one of the boys in the class to the Savior. He seemed troubled, and he said to me, “Teacher, are you saved?” I said “Yes.” “But are you sure you are?” said he, and though I did not answer him just then, I felt that I could not very

well tell him that there certainly was salvation in Jesus Christ unless I had tried Him for myself and been assured of it. Do try to get a firm foot, dear Brethren, and you will be more useful round the edge of the Slough than as though you were constantly slipping down.

Then, as you have to do business round this Slough, try to know it well. Try to find out its worst parts and where it is deepest. You will not have to go far to do this—you have probably been in it yourself and therefore know something about it—but you can easily gather from one and another where it is worst. Seek, if you can, to understand the mental philosophy of despondency. I do not mean by studying Dugald Stewart and other writers on mental philosophy, but by real heart-felt experience seek to become practically acquainted with the doubts and fears which agitate coming souls. When you have done this I hope the Lord will give you—for you will need it if you are to become very useful—a good strong hand in order to grip the sinner.

Jesus Christ did not heal the lepers without touching them and we cannot do good to other men by standing at a distance from them. The preacher sometimes gets hold of his hearers—he can feel he has them and can do almost anything with them—and if you are to be a “help,” you will have to learn the art of getting hold of the *conscience*, the *heart*, the *judgment*, the *whole man*. When you once get hold of a troubled heart, never let it go. Oh, I pray that you may have a hand like a vice that will never let go of the sinner when once you have hold of him! What? Shall the child of God let the sinner fall back into the Slough? No! Not while the rock on which he stands holds fast, and while he can hold the sinner by the hands of prayer and faith. May God teach you to grip men by love, by spiritual sympathy, by passion for souls so that you cannot let them go.

Once more, if you would help others out of the Slough of Despond, you must have a bending back. You cannot pull them out if you stand bolt upright—you must go right down to the man. There he is! He is almost gone! The mire is well near over his head—now you must turn up your sleeves and go to work. “But the man cannot speak correct English!” Never mind! Do not speak correct English to him for he would not understand it! Speak bad English, which he can understand. It is said that many of the sermons of Augustine are full of shockingly bad Latin, not because Augustine was not a good Latin scholar, but because the dog-Latin of the day suited his turn best to get hold of men.

There is a certain prudery about ministers which disqualifies them for some work—they cannot bring their mouth to utter a Truth of God in such language as fishermen would understand! Happy is that man whose mouth will say the Truth in such a way that the persons he is speaking to will receive it. “But the dignity of the pulpit!” says one. Well, and what is that? The “dignity” of a war chariot lies in the captives dragged at its wheels, and the “dignity of the pulpit” lies in the number of souls converted to God! Do not tell me of your fine jargon, your Johnsonian sentences, your rolling periods—there is no “dignity” in any of these if they go over the heads of your hearers! You must condescend to men of low estate.

You will, sometimes, meet with men and women to whom you really must talk to in a style which does not commend itself to your taste, but which your judgment and your heart will command and compel you to use. Learn to bend your back. Do not, for instance, go into a cottage like a fine lady coming to visit poor people. Go and sit down on a chair and sit on the edge if the rushes are gone. Sit close to the good woman, even if she is ever so dirty, and talk to her, not as her superior, but as her equal. If there is a boy playing marbles and you want to talk to him, you must not call him away from his play nor look down upon him from an awful elevation as a schoolmaster would. But begin with a few playful expressions and then drop a more serious sentence into his ear.

If you would do people good you must go down to them where they are! It is no use preaching fine sermons to drowning men! But go to the edge of the pool, put out your arms and try to pull them out. These, I verily think, are some of the qualifications of a true “help.”

III. Let me now close by ENDEAVORING TO INCITE THOSE OF MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO HAVE BEEN “HELPS” TO GO ON YET MORE EARNESTLY IN THE WORK, AND TO STIR UP THOSE WHO HAVE NOT TRIED IT, TO BEGIN.

Perhaps somebody may ask, “Why should I help others?” and my answer shall be, “because souls want help.” Is not that enough? The cry of misery is a sufficient argument for mercy. Souls want it. They die. They perish. They are ready to despair. Help them. There was a story in the papers last week of a man being found dead in a ditch who had been lying there, dead, for six weeks. It was said that somebody had heard a cry of, “Lost, lost,” but it was dark and he did not go

out to see who it was! “Shocking! Shocking!” you say, and yet just the very same thing may have been done by you! There are some persons here tonight who may not cry, “Lost,” because they do not feel they are lost, but they are so. And will you let them die in the ditch of their ignorance?

There are others who *are* crying, “Lost!” and who want a word of comfort. And will you let them perish in despair for the lack of it? My Brothers and Sisters, let the needs of humanity provoke you to activity! Remember, again, how you were helped, yourselves, when you were in a like condition. Some of us will never forget that dear Sunday school teacher, that tender mother, that Christian woman, that kind young man, that excellent elder of the Church who once did so much for us. We shall never forget their tender attention. They seemed to us as visions of bright angels when we were in the thick fog and darkness. Return the debt! Repay the obligation! Discharge what you owe and you cannot do this except by helping others as you were helped yourselves.

Moreover, Christ deserves it. There is a lamb out there that is lost. It is *His* lamb! Will you not care for it? If there were a strange child at my door asking for a night’s shelter, humanity might prompt me to take in the poor little creature out of the snow and wind. But if it were the child of my brother or of some dear friend, kindred sympathy would constrain me to protect it. That sinner is your Savior’s blood-bought one and is very dear to Him. He is a prodigal, but he is your Father’s son, and consequently your own brother! By the relationship there is, though he discerns it not at present, you are bound! A moral obligation rests upon you to give him your help.

O Beloved, you would not need any other argument if you knew how blessed the work is in itself! Would you acquire knowledge? Help others! Would you grow in Divine Grace? Help others! Would you shake off your own despondency? Help others! It quickens the pulse. It clears the vision. It steels the soul to courage. It confers a thousand blessings on your own souls to help others on the road to Heaven! Shut up your heart’s floods and they will become noisome, stagnant, putrid, foul. Let them flow and they shall be fresh and sweet, and shall well up continually! Live for *others*, and you will live a hundred lives in one. For blessedness, commend me to industry and divorce me from idleness!

But, if that is not enough, I think I may say that you are *called* to this work. Your Master has hired you! It is not for you to pick and choose what you will do—He has given you your talents and you *must* do what He bids you. Tonight, then, before you leave this house, try to do some practical service for your Master, for He has called you to it. If you do not, you will probably get the rod of correction. If you do not help others, God will treat you as men do their stewards who make no righteous use of the goods entrusted to them—your talent may be taken from you. Sickness may be waiting for you because you are not active while you are in health. You may be brought to poverty because you do not make a right use of riches. You may be brought into deep despair, yourselves, because you have not helped despairing souls.

Pharaoh’s dream has often been fulfilled. He dreamed that that there were seven fat bulls who fed in the meadow, and, by-and-by, there came seven lean bulls who ate up the fat ones. Sometimes, when you are full of joy and peace, you are lazy and idle and do not do any good to others. And whenever this is the case, you may depend upon it that very soon the seven lean bulls will come and eat up the seven fat bulls. You may rest quite assured that those lean days in which you do nothing for your Master—those lean prayers, those lean Sundays will eat up your fat Sundays, your fat graces, your fat joys—and then where will you be?

Besides all this, we are getting nearer Heaven and sinners are getting nearer Hell. The time in which we can win souls by serving Christ is getting very short. The days of some here must be very few and with none of us can they be very long. O let us think of the reward! Happy spirit who shall hear others say, as he enters the celestial regions, “My father, I welcome you!” Childless souls in Glory who were never made a blessing to others on earth must surely miss the very Heaven of Heaven. But they who have brought others to Christ shall have, in addition to their own Heaven, the joy of sympathy with other spirits whom they were the means of blessing.

I wish I could put my meaning into words that would burn their way into your hearts! I want every member of this Church to be a worker! We do not want any drones. If there are any of you who want to eat and drink and do nothing there are plenty of places elsewhere where you can do it! There are empty pews about in abundance—go and fill them, for we do not want you! Every Christian who is not a bee is a wasp. The most quarrelsome persons are the most useless, and they who are the most happy and peaceable are generally those who are doing most for Christ. We are not saved by working, but by Grace, but *because* we are saved we desire to be the instruments of bringing others to Jesus. I would stir you

all up to help in this work—old men, young men, and you, my Sisters, and all of you—according to your gifts and experience.

I want to make you feel, “I cannot do much, but I can help. I cannot preach, but I can help. I cannot pray in public, but I can help. I cannot give much money away, but I can help. I cannot officiate as an elder or a deacon, but I can help. I cannot shine as a bright particular star, but I can help. I cannot stand alone to serve my Master, but I can help.” There is a text from which an old Puritan once preached a very singular sermon. There were only two words in the text, and they were, “And Bartholomew.” The reason he took the text was that Bartholomew’s name is never mentioned alone, but he is always spoken of as doing some good thing with somebody else. He is never the principal actor, but always second. Well, let this be *your* feeling—that if you cannot do all yourself, you will help to do what you can.

Gather we not, this night, as a meeting of Council to present degrees to such disciples as through many sessions of labor have merited them? I confer upon you who have used your opportunities well the sacred title of “Helps.” Others of you shall have it when you deserve it. Go and win it! God grant that it may be your joy to wear the holy vestment of charity, fringed with humility, and to enter into Heaven praising God that He helped you to be a helper to others.

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