

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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A SERMON
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*“Ye are the light of the world.”
Matthew 5:14*

THIS title had been given by the Jews to certain of their eminent Rabbis. With great pomp they spoke of Rabbi Judah, or Rabbi Jochanan, as the lamps of the universe, the lights of the world. It must have sounded strange in the ears of the Scribes and Pharisees, to hear that same title, in all soberness, applied to a few bronzed-faced, and rough-handed peasants and fishermen, who had become disciples of Jesus. Jesus, in effect, said,—not the Rabbis, not the Scribes, not the assembled Sanhedrin, but you, My humble followers, you are the light of the world.

He gave them this title, not after He had educated them for three years, but at almost the outset of His ministry, and from this I gather that the title was given them, not so much on account of what they knew, as on account of what they were. Not their knowledge, but their character made them the light of the world.

They were not yet fully trained in His spiritual school and yet He says to them, “Ye are the light of the world,” the fact being, that wherever there is faith in Christ there is light, for our Lord has said, “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not walk in darkness.” “The entrance of thy word giveth light.”

Genuine faith in Christ turns a man from darkness to marvelous light, and transforms him into “light in the Lord”—his aims and objects, his desires, his speech, his actions become full of divine light, which illuminates all the chambers of his soul and then pours forth from the windows so as to be seen of men. The believer is appointed to be a lighthouse to others, a cheering lamp, a guiding star.

It is true that his light will be increased as he learns more of Christ. He will be able to impart more instruction to others when he has received more, but even while he is yet a beginner, his faith in Jesus is in itself a light. Men see his good works even before they discover his knowledge. The man of faith who aims at holiness is a light of the world, even though his knowledge may be very limited and his experience that of a babe.

I mention this at the outset in order that every Christian may see the application of the text to himself. It is not spoken to the apostles, or to ministers exclusively, but to the entire body of the faithful—“Ye are the light of the world.” You humble men and women whose usefulness will be confined to your cottages, or to your workshops, you whose voices will never be heard in the streets, whose speech will only be eloquent in the ears of those who gather by your firesides. You, even you, noiseless and unobserved as your lives will be—you are the true light of the world.

Not only the men whose learned volumes load our shelves, not only the men whose thundering tones startle the nations, or who with busy care for God's glory, compass sea and land to find subjects for the kingdom of Jesus, but you, each one of you, who are humbly resting upon the Savior, and lovingly carrying out your high vocation as the children of God, and followers of His dear Son.

Let us never forget that light must first be imparted to us or it can never go forth from us. We are not lights of the world by nature. At best we are but lamps unlit until the Spirit of God comes. Inquire, therefore, my hearer, of yourself whether God has ever kindled you by the flame of His Spirit. Have you been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into light? Has the flame immortal of the divine life touched you?

If so, you have light in yourself, and light towards others, and your light will work effectually in many ways. It will reveal the darkness of those who are round about you. Your light will show the darkness how dark it is. Even as Christ's life judged upon the men of His age, so does the faith of Christians expose the evils of unbelief, and the holiness of believers reveals the wickedness of sin.

Our light also reproveth the deeds of darkness and condemns them. Even though we were never to use a severe word, a godly life would be a stern rebuke of sin. Hence it comes to pass that we must expect to be opposed, for "He that doeth evil hateth the light." The world does not understand us, "For the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness understandeth it not." And therefore, it misrepresents us and rages against us.

In a certain sense the saints are day by day the judges of mankind. They avoid all censoriousness, for they know who has said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," but unconsciously to themselves their godly, holy, and devout lives accuse and condemn the wicked. And the Spirit of God through them full often convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

The believer's light makes manifest great and important truths. We are light-bearers by bearing testimony to the Lord Jesus and His divine Gospel. "Ye are my witnesses saith the LORD." We have believed and therefore speak. We have felt the healing power of the Gospel, and therefore we proclaim it.

It is the great object of our lives to make known the Gospel of Christ in every place, holding forth the Word of God, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, and laboring to enlighten every man as to the things which make for his peace. In this way we become instruments of comfort, for as light chases away gloom and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, so are believers the gladders of the world.

The wilderness and the solitary places are glad for them. Those who sit in the region of the shadow of death rejoice that to them light is brought by means of believers. When they come to the dying sons of men in the power of the Spirit their feet are beautiful upon the mountains, for they publish salvation. Saints are sons of consolation, lamps which cheer the night.

Their light is a guiding light which leads wanderers to the place of rest, and a saving light, for it manifests Jesus to sinners. See your calling, my brethren, admire it, be humbled that you have not fulfilled it better, and ask for grace that, as the lights in the world, you may be all that such a figure signifies.

Many wide subjects are opening up before us, but I will not venture upon the open sea, for a narrow strait is before me, through which I would steer your meditations with a practical purpose. The channel which your thoughts should follow is the inquiry—why is it that God has been pleased to make His people the lights of the world? He might have been the Light of the world Himself without instrumentalities. Or if He must use agents, flaming seraphim would surely have been majestic golden lamps with which to illuminate the nations.

For what purpose has Christ been pleased to make His disciples the light of the world? Why has He put this honor upon His church and upon each one of His followers? That is the question we will talk of, but as even this is too wide a subject, we must narrow it down to one line of thought. God has purposes with regard to Himself to be answered by using men as His agents—these we will not touch upon. We will only think of those reasons which have reference to ourselves. We look at the question manward. Why does God make men to be lights to other men?

There are three answers. First, *it averts from the light-givers themselves many evils*. Secondly, *it bestows upon them many benefits*. And thirdly, *it has an encouraging aspect towards the light-receivers*—those who are, meanwhile, sitting in darkness and needing the light.

I. At the outset we observe that, for God to make His people light-givers is THE MEANS OF AVERTING FROM THEM MANY EVILS. You will see this in a moment.

In the first place, *it purges true godliness from the taint of selfishness*. The very first thing we want a man to feel is a deep concern for his own personal salvation—we would have him think of his own sins

and repent of them—think of Jesus and personally believe on Him. Men love to hide in crowds, but grace brings them to be units. Men are satisfied to condemn sin in the gross, but true conviction makes each man condemn sin in himself.

God's minister aims to come home to the conscience with the words of Nathan, "Thou art the man." More and more we want to see our careless hearers anxious that they themselves should be saved, for what will it profit them to hear the Gospel if they are hearers only? What will it profit them if their neighbors are converted and they remain unregenerate? Of what value is a national religion if we have not a personal religion?

It is needful that men think about their own souls. Now this necessary anxiety might degenerate into selfishness and a man might come to ask with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper." Observe, then, how the truth of our text counteracts this tendency to selfishness. It shows that our personal salvation operates at once upon others. The lighted candle shines upon all comers.

You get light—it is needful to yourself—but you cannot have that light at all without its becoming immediately useful to those around you, for light is essentially diffusive and shines not for itself. If light could be kept to itself, it would cease to be light. Grace which you can keep under a bushel or under a bed, is not a candle of the Lord's lighting.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*," is good full Gospel. The salvation which comes to the man personally affects his house also, and he is to look at it as a treasure with which he is put in trust for the benefit of those about him. If the believer grows in grace, his obtaining more light involves the giving of more light.

If yonder light on the tower of the House of Commons could be made ten times more brilliant tomorrow, it would be brilliant for us and we should share in its radiance. When the moon is at her fullest, her fullness is for us rather than for herself. Increase the light of even a farthing candle and you have increased the light which everybody enjoys who looks at the candle. Strengthen the illuminating power of the gas. It is not to itself alone that it is so strengthened, but to all the eyes which are enlightened by it. It must be so.

If a man should advance to the highest stage of Christian holiness, it is inevitable that his progress should be an increase to the means of enlightenment for others. Holy example in the world lifts the standard of morality. Holy example in the church raises the platform of spirituality. Good men even unconsciously do much towards illuminating others, even as the watchman's lantern shines while the watchman sleeps.

But above this, the better a man is the more he longs and labors to benefit his fellow men. Hence there is no selfishness in a man's desiring to be holy, for intertwined with his own personal holiness, so as to be inseparable, is his usefulness to those among whom he lives. To *do* good, we must *be* good. The warp and weft cannot be separated here.

To confer good, you must possess good. If a man were divested of the last rag of selfishness and lived alone for others, it would be his highest wisdom to look well to his own personal condition before God—he must himself see or he will be a sorry guide. He must himself be strong or he will be a feeble helper. The using of the saints, therefore, as lights of the world is a most effectual remedy for like selfishness.

A second evil thus averted is this, *it prevents the personality of religion from becoming isolation*. It is very important that religion should be a personal thing. On one of the foremost banners of our host is written this word, "Personality in religion." We as Baptists bear that testimony by our very peculiarity. We do not believe a person should be baptized except it be by his own wish and request.

We consider all religion by proxy to be an unmitigated farce, if not worse. The man must do it himself. It must be his personal repentance, his personal faith, his personal baptism, his personal everything, or else it is good for nothing. The tendency of that principle, if exaggerated, is towards isolation, so that a man forgets that he has any connection with other people.

Now, our Lord says, "You cannot live alone; you are the light of the world." From that fact arise connections which look backwards, for we ourselves were brought into the family of light through the light of others. To most of us it is a spiritual father, to many of us a nursing mother. We came into the church not as orphans into an asylum, to find no relative there, but we found in the church brethren and fathers, true helpers of our weakness, and instructors of our ignorance. We are linked to other Christians by the good which we frequently receive from them, for lights as we are ourselves, we also rejoice in the light of our brethren who are brighter than we are.

Today we have also other links which bind us to our brethren in Jesus, for many of us have given light to others. We look with loving eyes upon those who are our spiritual children, and they look back to us with affectionate esteem, as having received great benefit by our means. Throughout the church this process is going on.

Men and women, by teaching in the Sunday school, by the street preaching, and in a thousand other ways, are putting forth their light, and finding others who become members of the illuminated family. And so the use of the members of the church by God, the one for the ingathering of the other, prevents each man from being a separate stone by himself, and aids in building us up together a spiritual house for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Therefore blessed be the Savior for making us lights in the world, since though we now maintain each man for himself his personality before his God, yet we are linked in sacred brotherhood by the common service which our Lord has appointed us.

In the next place, this *preserves our separateness from the world from souring into misanthropy*. As Christians we are essentially Nonconformists. The radical precept of our conversation is, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." We are in the world, but we are not of it.

In a certain sense we love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If we loved the world, the love of the Father would not be in us. Now, one might soon misunderstand this position and by degrees look down from a Pharisaic elevation and say, "I do not belong to this world. I am superior to it and utterly despise it. I take no interest in its welfare, it is too base a thing for me to care about."

We should soon grow to be men-haters and say, "The world lieth in the wicked one, therefore let it seethe in its own fat and rot in its own corruption. If we can but hurry through its Vanity Fair, and get away, it is all we desire."

I think I have seen something of this sort in certain brethren who promulgate the theory that a few are to be rescued from the wreck which is breaking up and going to pieces on the beach—just a few may be brought to shore, and all hope that the vessel itself will ever float again is gone. All idea that it will bear at its masthead the blood red banner of the cross is sheer delusion. We have nothing to do but to load the lifeboats with here and there one, and pull away from the wreck with all speed.

Now I do not believe in this theory and I hope I never shall. I feel a yearning towards the blinded sons of men. I cannot take satisfaction in them, but I feel a love of benevolence towards them. And every Christian who has realized the love of Christ must, I think, feel the same. I believe that the kingdoms of this world will yet become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

"Ye are the light of the world," is a sure remedy for all man-hating, for now we feel such love to the world as that which the nurse has towards her foster child. It may be a very tiresome child, but she is entrusted with it, and because its hunger cannot be appeased except she shall feed it, and its nakedness cannot be clothed except she shall wrap it up, its needs and its weaknesses appeal to her pity, and she cares for it till by degrees her heart warms into an intense affection towards it.

That is the sort of feeling which our Lord would have us cultivate towards mankind. Poor world, poor world, it is dark, and gropes in midnight, and it cannot get light except it receives it through us! Poor world, it is sick and none can give it healing medicine, but the Lord's own people! It is dying and only through us will God say to it, "Live."

Do you not feel an interest in sinners when you know that the way in which sinners are saved is by a saved sinner going after a lost sinner and bringing him to Jesus? When you feel that the Holy Ghost works by you to the salvation of men, will you not love them? I am sure some of us would give up preaching if we did not feel that God, in some way or other, has made our ministry needful to the calling out of His chosen.

He has given His Son power over all flesh, and He has divided, as it were, that all flesh into parts, and made us princes over a portion of it. And thus He has given to me power over some flesh and He has given to my brother minister power over another portion, that through us, eternal life may be given to as many as God has given to His Son.

This forbids us to look out upon mankind with the proud feeling of disgust or the miserable feeling of despair. No, as the stars look down upon the night and cheer it, so we look upon our benighted race. As the disciples of Jesus looked on the hungry thousands who were to be fed by their hands, so look we on the masses around us.

How can we frown on them, for we are lights to them. God means to bless them through us, therefore are they dear to us. Thus we have learned how to be separate from sinners as light is separate from darkness, and yet to be their best friends even as the moon is the best benefactor of the night.

Again, this arrangement *delivers our confidence in God's purposes from sinking into the indolence of fatalism*. We firmly believe that God will save His own elect, that Christ will never lose one whom His Father gave Him, and that the purposes of God will all be accomplished. No fatalist can go further than I will go in the full and distinct averment that God's decrees shall be fulfilled.

There are, however, persons who argue from this, that therefore we may sit down and do nothing as to the salvation of others. Such persons are very foolish, because they must be aware that the same logic which would drive them to do nothing spiritually, would require them to do nothing in other matters, so that they would neither eat, nor drink, nor think, nor breathe—do nothing, in fact, but lie like logs, passive under fate's iron sway.

This is too absurd to need an answer. Believers are cured of that tendency by the belief that they are the lights of the world. God will accomplish His purposes and give light to men, but we are the light of the world. He will accomplish His purposes of grace through His church. He will enlighten the Gentiles, He will give sight to the blind eyes, but He intends to do it through those whom He has already saved.

Therefore, with the calm courage which reliance upon eternal purposes has given to us, we mingle a stern determination to be active in season and out of season, because we are predestinated by the eternal God to be the light of the sons of men. The tendency of the one doctrine, if looked at exclusively, might have been dangerous if it had not been balanced by the second doctrine.

Once more, *the natural longing of the believer to be with Christ is prevented from running to extremes by the truth now before us*. There is not a Christian here who has not in high, holy, and happy times, sung with Dr. Watts—

*“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Thine abode;
I'd leave Thine earthly courts and flee
Up to Thy seat, my God.”*

As a holy man of old was wont to count each year of his life a year of banishment from Christ, so have we reckoned that every hour we linger here is so much taken from our heavenly rest, and sometimes we have said, “Woe is me that I dwell in Mesech and tabernacle in the tents of Kedar.”

But when we have heard the Master say, “Ye are the light of the world,” ah! then we have understood it all and we have felt content to stay if there is darkness which needs enlightenment by our means. Let us tarry, good Master, we do not wish to be gone if You have need of us here, for this is so honorable a position, that we do not envy the angels their celestial seats while we have the privilege of

enlightening the benighted sons of men. If you, O Lord, can do anything good through us, extend our banishment and make our seventy years into seventy centuries, if so it please You.

Our heaven is where we can best glorify our God. I believe that the hope of usefulness is often a very effectual stay to the longings of believers, so that cheerfully they are enabled to wait their appointed time in this land of the dying.

So you see a great many evils are averted through the use which Christ makes of His people in setting them in their places as the light of the world.

II. Now, secondly, and concisely—IT BESTOWS MANY BLESSINGS UPON THE WORKERS THEMSELVES.

For first, to be a light to others keeps us constantly in mind of the benefits which we have received. We see sinners in darkness and we remember when *we* were in darkness too. We hear their penitential cries, and we remember when we wept and mourned before the Lord. We note their struggles and observe their doubts and fears, suspicions and misgivings, and we see as in a mirror our own early history reproduced.

When at last we are enabled to point them to the Savior and they can say, “Christ is mine,” we feel our youth renewed in them. We live over again our early days and the love of our espousals is restored. Just as many a grandsire grows young again as his grandchildren climb his knee, so do we remember the joys of our youth in those dear ones who are begotten unto God by His grace through our labor of love.

We are made to see ourselves in them and so to return to those dear banquets of His love which marked the dawning of our life in Christ. The sight of new-born babes warms our cold blood. Blessed be the love that saved me. Blessed be the love that washed me. Blessed be the love that renewed me! Thus we cry when we see others saved, washed, and renewed.

Working for others makes us tenaciously hold to the Gospel. I have frequently remarked that the inventors of heresies are mostly editors of newspapers, essayists, writers for magazines, and other theorists, who do very little or nothing of practical work among the fallen and degraded.

It is the rarest thing in the world to find city missionaries, evangelists, or working pastors, up to their necks in work among the poor and sinful, who have any sympathy with modern intellectualism. Find a man who is pleading with sinners—really practically engaged in the work, and is bringing souls to Jesus Christ, and I will warrant you that he will be orthodox.

He believes in the doctrine of human depravity, for he sees it to be a fact. He believes in the work of the Holy Spirit, for he often sees his own work to be good for nothing. He believes in sovereign grace, for he often observes that some are saved whom he least expected to see and those whom he looked for are left behind. There is nothing like work to keep a man soundly evangelical.

When a fellow has nothing to do, the devil puts it into his head to write an essay against the orthodox faith. The man is a practical ignoramus, and therefore, he is wiser than seven men that can render a reason. His hands are unemployed, and therefore, he wanders about in Christ’s halls, whittling the doctrines of truth, and inventing new notions to please his fancy.

Get to work and you will be healthy. if God makes you a light to others, you will be bright yourself. As you are giving the light, your shining will burn off the spots and blots. When iron is red hot, the blackness disappears. Streams as they run let fall their impurities and filter themselves—and so the working Christian is enabled by God’s Spirit to purge himself from errors. He does God’s will and therefore he knows His doctrine.

To work for Jesus also arouses all a man’s faculties. Nobody knows what is in him till he is fired with a lofty ambition and moved by a glorious impulse. Many servants of God think they have but one talent, but they would soon discover ten if they would but bestir themselves. No man knows in business, or in trade, or in any department of science, what he is capable of till he has commenced the pursuit.

When he has commenced, he finds that what was difficult becomes easy, that what was impossible becomes only a little difficult, and by and by is achieved. And so the Christian calls forth all his mental and spiritual faculties by diligently working for his Lord. Marvelous is the manner in which men will

develop when they fall in love with souls! When a great passion seizes us, we are carried beyond ourselves.

Look at those great bounds and mighty springs which yonder hound makes while in hot pursuit of the stag. He ran not thus at the first, but now that you would expect him to drop from very weariness, he is more impetuous than ever. Every muscle and sinew are in full play, his eagerness makes him alive with an intensity which you had not guessed before.

So, in pursuing souls, men are marvelously quickened and filled with energy. They seemed dull in ordinary conversation—you could not imagine that they would have spoken so. Who dreamed that there was such fire in these flints?

They are arguing for Jesus and they do it well. Their wits are all awake, they give the right answer to an objection, they are so intensely wrought up, that they seem more than they ever were before, and they are so, indeed, for the Spirit makes all of us what we never could have been apart from His divine influences. And so, in serving others, we rise to the fullness of manhood ourselves.

Giving light to others also develops and matures all our graces. If some of you had to preach every Sunday morning, it would exercise your faith. You would get sometimes on Saturday to say, “What shall be the subject? How shall I again go before that mass of people? How shall I win their interested attention once again?”

You would find that you have preached upon the easiest of the texts, and if, as in my case, you have had your sermons printed, you will say, “Where’s the new subject to come from?” And you will look up, and say, “My God, Your message I have received aforetime, and I shall receive it again, but help me, I pray You.”

Every kind of service for Christ exercises and strengthens faith. I only mention preaching as an instance of a general truth. Christian work also tries patience, love, hope, zeal, and all our graces, and in trying them, it perfects them. I do not know a worse thing that could happen to a Christian than to have nothing to do. It is enough to kill a man to be doomed to inaction.

Many a man in retiring from business, has retired into misery, he had better to have gone to the shop still, even if he had not taken a penny out of its earnings. I have heard of men who have given up all their avocations and have afterwards desired to hire themselves out to their successors, in order to have some occupation for their minds.

A man cannot do better than retire from his business when he can, if he will then make it his business to serve Christ with all his might. But if he has nothing at all to do, not only will Satan lead him into mischief, but he will be quite sure to make a great deal of misery for himself. Faculties rust and graces wither in indolence.

God has made us on purpose for service, and we must bow our neck to the yoke, or the goad will be in our flanks. Though the candle is consumed by shining, yet its shining is its truest life. All the light which lies concealed in it is fetched out and manifested by the process of light-giving.

To be the light of the world surrounds life with the most stupendous responsibilities and so invests it with the most solemn dignity. Hear this, you humble men and women, you who have made no figure in society, you are the light of the world. If you burn dimly, dim is the world’s light and dense its darkness. How wretched is a city at night if the lamps are unlit! How cheerless is a room when the candle is blown out! What would earth be without the sun?

Shall we to men benighted the lamp of life deny? Shall the world be left in darkness through our idleness? Ye are the lights not merely of your own households and your own neighborhoods, but collectively you make up the entire light of the whole wide world. To you the present age must look and upon you even future ages depend.

For good or ill every man among us will affect all time. If any one man knows a truth and does not tell it to his fellows, there will be so much less light in the world and consequences little dreamed of may follow his traitorous silence. If any Christian man here is not living consistently, his follies will lessen the brightness of the church and the operation of that mischief may never be stayed.

We are links of an endless chain—each one affects all the rest. If there be one man within my reach from whom I withhold instruction and upon whom I exercise no holy influence, the loss may be far more than I imagine—for he in his turn might have taught others and so on without end. I may shine afterwards, but all the shining which should have come from me during the period in which I was dim is a dead loss—an irretrievable loss to the world, so much less light is there for immortal souls forever through my neglect.

I will not enlarge upon illustrations so hackneyed as those which might be gathered from the lighthouse-keeper, who must keep his lantern trimmed or vessels will be wrecked. Nor would I do more than remind you of the Cornish wreckers whose false lights have lured so many to destruction, but pray remember that you are practically the lighthouse-keepers of the world, or else you are wreckers of the souls of men. You are either your brother's keeper or your brother's murderer.

Your failure to be lights will not end with you—it will curse others endlessly. A solemn sermon earnestly preached may affect not merely the people who hear it, but through them their children and their children's children. A good thought dropped into a child's heart may change the child's entire career and that boy may afterwards influence a nation for good.

You never know how far a spark of holy fire will burn. The responsibilities and the possibilities of the humblest among us are incalculable. Since we are the lights of the world, to this world we are more important than cherubim or seraphim. I reckon that the responsibilities of emperors, kings, members of Parliament, and judges are trifling compared with the responsibilities of Christians, for these great ones are not the lights of the world—they do but sweep its house and arrange its furniture.

But ours is the light without which men cannot truly live—ours is light for immortality and for heaven, without it men fall into judgment and hell. Therefore upon us press responsibilities which are beyond all measure.

Furthermore, out of this it arises that the light-giver, feeling his responsibility, flies to the Lord Jesus Christ for help, and anything that drives us to Jesus is a great blessing to us. The tremendous need which the Christian's position puts upon him makes him cry out to the strong for strength, saying, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And by that very cry, a blessing comes into his soul.

But more, the desire to win souls to Christ drives men to self-denial, for they feel that if the world is to be blessed by them, they can do anything in order to accomplish the purpose—they can put up with rough usage, with misrepresentations, with slanders, with ingratitude, with malice, yea, and endure imprisonment and death itself, if they can but fulfill their destiny and be lights to the world.

By such self-denials and abounding love they are educated into the likeness of Christ. They are called lights of the world and that name is all His own. You have seen the marvelous picture by Holman Hunt and noted its masterly teachings. He calls it, "The Light of the World." It is the Master who stands there, and that same sorrowful King bearing the mystic lantern speaks to us now, and says, "Ye are this lantern, ye are the light of the world."

O take care, beloved, since such an honor is put upon you, that you discharge your mission aright. And if you live for that end, it will create in you all those qualities which make the saints like the great Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.

III. I had much more to say, but there is no time, therefore I must close with the last reflection, that for God to use men to give light to other men has AN ASPECT OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR SINNERS.

Beloved hearers, you who know not Christ, it ought to encourage you to believe that God means well towards you, since He sends your fellow men to say to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Ambassadors are not usually chosen from the offending side. A great king will generally send one of his own friends, not one of the rebel race, to negotiate peace.

But God has chosen us, who were rebels ourselves, and has sent us to you, who were our fellow rebels, and we say, "Turn unto the LORD and live." Does it not look as if He meant His love, and kindness, and tenderness to you?

Note, also, that every Christian who speaks to you about Jesus is, himself, an instance of God's power as well as His love. He can save you from your sins, for He has saved these men and women. Those who speak to you about the Savior bear witness that they were lost in sin as you are, as little able to shake off the chains of sin as you are, yet are they set free. Yet are they turned from darkness unto light.

And He who has saved them gives you a pledge that He can save you. If He does this to one, why can He not do it to another? It shows His tenderness with you. He thought that if He sent an angel to preach to you, you might be afraid. Perhaps as you saw the glitter of his countenance you might have started back with alarm.

When the face of Moses shone, the Israelites could not bear to look upon it—therefore are there no glories upon the face of ministers now, and those who talk to you about your souls are just like yourselves, that they may give you confidence and win your hearts. We cry to you, "Come with us to the cross. Come with us to the great Father. Come with us and say, "Father, I have sinned." It was a tender thoughtfulness of God that there should be nothing to scare His sheep away, but that the shepherds who seek them should come in humble, tender guise to them.

Frequently there is a special suitableness in the light-bearers whom God sends to men. For instance, your mother has pleaded with you, your father has spoken to you about your soul. Will you reject such an embassy? If my God chooses my father to plead with me to be reconciled to Him, I will think of the message for my father's sake as well as for the sake of my God.

Some of you have lately received letters of entreaty from your sisters—you have been earnestly pressed by converted brothers—and other kind friends not related to you have shown very special desire for your conversion. Now that these good people should so unselfishly care about you, ought it not to affect your mind?

It will not deprive them of heaven if you are lost. If you are saved, I do not know that one of the trials of their life will be softened to them, yet they love your soul. Do give them a patient hearing. Think over what they have to say. Do not treat them harshly. I think it could not be in the heart of a true man to act unkindly towards one who meant him well, even if he reckoned that the friend was mistaken.

Remember, if your counselors are God's people and are living by faith in Jesus, there is a sacred authority about the poorest and meanest of them—and in rejecting their message you may be rejecting Christ. I claim no priesthood, neither would I tolerate it in any man, save only this, that every Christian is a priest before God. Listen to the priests of God, then, as they speak to you. God, by them, would draw you to Himself, by their hands He would cast around you the bands of love and the cords of a man.

Lastly, remember if God speaks to you by honest, earnest hearts, which care for your soul, and if you put the message of salvation far from you, you will be without excuse, both now and at the last day. And amongst the witnesses at your judgment, whom you will most blush to see, will be the men and women who earnestly sought your good.

I see your mother coming, and if she is asked, "Did this son of yours know the Gospel? Did he sin against light and knowledge?" What can she say, but Amen to your condemnation? Against many of you I fear I shall be forced to be a swift witness at the last. I have told you the Gospel in words as plain as I could find. I have often flung away a metaphor, and given up a period which might have sounded well, because I thought it would not have been understood or would have missed your consciences.

I have tried to keep to the greatest plainness of speech that no one might misunderstand me. I have kept back no unpalatable truth from you. I have not hesitated to speak with great boldness. I have told you that if you believe in Jesus you shall live, if you will not believe in Him you must be lost.

If you will not trust in my Lord Jesus Christ, your blood is on your own heads. I am clear of you. In the last day this shall be a terrible part of your reflections, that not only God will be clear and Christ will be clear, but even your fellow men who loved you best will have to admit that you deserved your doom.

God grant it may never be so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 5:1-32

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.