

BELIEVERS—LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

NO. 472

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1862,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Do all things without murmurings and disputing, that you may be blameless and harmless, children of God, without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world; holding fast the Word of Life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”
Philippians 2:14-16.

We shall be very far from the truth if we suppose that Christian precepts have suffered any degeneration of meaning. If we imagine that the precepts of the Gospel were more stern in Apostolic times than in these later ages, we labor under a very gross and dangerous delusion! Fresh from the abominations of heathenism, the early converts would naturally be placed under the mildest rules, rather than the more severe. If the Gospel could have known a change, the Apostle would have given its easiest precepts at the first, and then in these better days, the whole Revelation would have been brought out, and more stringent precepts would have been proclaimed. Since, however, it is contrary to the genius of the Gospel to be progressive in its Revelation, since it was all revealed at once, we must never imagine that the precepts given by Paul may be toned down and diluted to suit the present age. I say again, Brothers and Sisters, if these men, fresh from the foul Stygian ditch of heathen abomination and lasciviousness, were nevertheless exhorted to the greatest sublimity of holiness, much more is it incumbent upon us to arrive at a very high state of Christian perfection, and walk very near to God, and be very close imitators of Christ! May God help us to hear, this morning, the address which Paul gave to the Church in Philippi! May we feel its full force in our consciences, and embody its full meaning in our lives.

The Apostle says, “*Do all things*”—by which he seems to teach the activity of the Christian Church, for the Christian religion is not mere thinking or feeling, but *doing* and working for God. “*Do all things without murmurings*,” without murmuring at *God’s Providence*—which was a common vice of the heathen, who, on their tombstones often recorded their protest against God for having removed their darlings, and upbraided Him as cruel and unkind for taking away their relatives. “*Do all things without murmurings against one another.*” Let your love be so hearty and sincere that you do not envy your richer or more talented Brothers and Sisters. Let there be no low whispers traveling through your assemblies against those who ought to be esteemed among you. Whatever you do, let no murmuring be mixed with it, but labor with delight, and suffer with patience. Let there be no murmurings even against *the ungodly world*. If they are unjust, bear their injustice in silence! Be not always offering complaints; there are a thousand things which you might speak of, but it is better that, like Aaron, you should hold your peace. To suffer in silence shall dignify you, and make you greater than ordinary manhood—for then you shall become like He, who before His accusers opened not His mouth.

The Apostle continues, do all things without “*disputing.*” Dispute not with God; let Him do what seems good to Him. Dispute not with your fellow Christians, raise not railing accusations against them. When Calvin was told that Luther had spoken ill of him, he said, “Let Luther call me a devil if he pleases, I will never say of him but that he is a most dear and valiant servant of the Lord.” Raise not intricate and knotty points by way of controversy; remember, you have adversaries upon whom to use your swords, and therefore there is little need that you should blunt their edges by dashing at the armor of your fellows! Dispute not even with the world. The heathen philosophers always sought occasions for debate; be it yours to testify what God has told you, but court not controversy. Be not ashamed to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, but never do it in a spirit of mere debating—never because you wish to gain a victory, but only because you would tell what God has bid you reveal.

“*That you may be blameless.*” Men *will* blame you, but you must seek, as Christians, to lead lives that give no occasion for blame. Like Daniel, compel them to say of you, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the Law of his God.” Erasmus writes of his great adversary, Luther, “Even Luther’s ene-

mies cannot deny but that he is a good man.” Brothers and Sisters, force this tribute from an unwilling world; live so that as in Tertullian’s age, men may say as they did in his time, “Such-and-such a man is a good man, even though he is a Christian.” The heathens thought the Christians the worst of men, but were compelled to confess them to be the best, even though they were Christians! “Be you blameless *and harmless*,” says the Apostle. The Greek word might be translated “hornless,” as if you were to be creatures not only that do no harm, but *could not* do any; like sheep that not only *will not* devour, but *cannot* devour, for it were contrary to their nature, for they have no teeth with which to bite, no fangs with which to sting, no poison with which to slay. If you carry arrows, let them be dipped in love; if you bear a sword, let it be the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! But otherwise, be everywhere, even among those who would harm you, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” “*As children of God*,” the Apostle goes on to say—as if the dignity of our relationship should beget in us an equally dignified deportment. “Remember,” says the old philosopher—“Remember, O Antigonus, that you are a king’s son!” Remember, O Christian, that you are a son of the King of kings—even God Himself! Soil not the fingers which are soon to sweep celestial strings; let not those eyes become the windows of lust which are soon to see the King in His beauty; let not those feet be defiled in miry places, which are soon to walk the golden streets; let not those hearts be filled with pride and bitterness which are soon to be filled with Heaven, and to overflow with ecstatic joy. As “children of God,” remember that the eyes of all are upon you! More is expected from you than from other men, because you have a higher pedigree, for you are descended from the very highest, Himself, and therefore you should be the highest and best in the world. The Apostle then adds, “*without fault*.” Men whom the world cannot rebuke. Men who can stand right straight up, and defy their enemies to find any real fault in them. Men who can say without any Phariseism, as Job did, “Lord, You know that I am not wicked.” My Brothers and Sisters, I would you were such that men must lie before they can revile you! I would have you men upon whose snow-white garments filth will not stick—who may be, and must be slandered, but cannot be really rebuked. O Beloved, to use Paul’s own words, “Be you sons of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.”

I have expounded the address of Paul, permit me to remind you that all the while he is telling us to do this as the means to an end—and what is the end? Why, that we may, “shine as lights in the world in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.” The means themselves are precious; to be “holy, harmless and undefiled,” is a glorious matter of itself. But when such a bright thing becomes but a *means*, how excellent must the end be! How desirable that you and I, and each one of us who has named the name of Jesus, should “shine as lights in the world, holding fast the Word of Life”!

This brings me to the subject which I want to impress upon your hearts this morning. I would that every Believer here, whether member of this Church or of any of the part of Christ’s family, might see to it, that from now on he should shine as a light in the midst of the darkness of this world, giving light to those who come within the range of his influence. There seems to me to be four things about which I may well speak. First, here is *publicity required*—they cannot shine without it. Here is, secondly, *usefulness intended*. Here is thirdly, *position indicated*—they are “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.” And here is, fourthly, *an argument suggested*, that in the day of Christ I may rejoice that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

I. First then, here is A MEASURE OF PUBLICITY REQUIRED.

You will note the text says they are to be *lights*. Now how can they be lights without being seen, and of what use would they be if they could be unseen lights? I cannot tell! But then, they are to *shine*, and how can they shine unless there is some radiance proceeding from them, and how this if they live in secret, and if they are never understood to be Christians at all? But then, where does the text say they are to shine as lights?—in their house? No, “*in the world*.” True, they are to be lights in their own family; but moreover if they come up to the full standard of what they should be, they are to be lights *in the world*. These three words—lights, lights shining, and lights in the world—most positively teach that a Christian must have some degree of publicity, and that it is hardly possible for him to carry out his true character if he lives in such retirement and secrecy as never to be known to be a Christian. Some timid hearts there are, some gentle spirits, who shun altogether the exposure of their religion; they quote Nicodemus as if they did not know that Nicodemus is rather a beacon than an example. I would be far from crushing a tender spirit, far from laughing at the nervousness which may keep a man in the back rank when he ought to stand in the forefront of the battle; but if I should, by some Scriptural remarks, lead Christians to see that they are not to be always seeking retirement, but rather they must

stand out and avow the Master, and if I can persuade the gentle spirit to bear its willing witness to Christ, thrice happy shall I be!

Pharisees of old courted publicity. They could not give away one halfpenny in the street, but they must sound a trumpet that everybody might see their splendid charity! They could not pray in their closet, but they must seek some corner of the street that every passerby might hold up his hands in amazement at the man who was so good that he prayed even in the street! The world has found this trick out; we usually say of ladies, when we find them working at parties, that they do not work at home; and we would surely think of people who pray in the streets, that they pray nowhere else; and of persons who show their charity publicly, that they show all that they have to show! Ostentatious religion nowadays is soon discovered and detected. But while we must be warned against the pride of the Pharisee, we must take care that we run not into another extreme! “Am I always to serve God by stealth? Am I never to speak a good word for Christ lest somebody should say I am proud?” Your own conscience will be your guide in that matter; if you detect in yourself any desire to glorify yourself—then you are wrong in making your religion public at all! Plainly, if you discover that you are keeping back in order to get an easier path for yourself—then you are grievously wrong in seeking to hide your religion! If it is for God’s honor for you to publish on the housetops what He has told you in the closet, do it; and if it is for Christ’s honor to do only in the closet that which another man would do in the street, do it. Your conscience will always teach you, if it is an enlightened conscience, when you might act boldly, and when, on the other hand, you would be cowardly. I think there is no difficulty in steering between this Scylla and Charybdis. Any man with a little wisdom will soon discern what he ought to do. But do not, I pray you, make the Pharisee’s pride an excuse for your cowardice! Never say, “I do not like to make a profession because there are so many hypocrites!” This is the more reason why *you should* make a profession, that there may be some honest ones. Do not say, “Oh, I would not, for fear people should think I am proud!” Why should you look at the fear of man which brings a snare—is it not yours to obey God, rather than man?

I cannot understand Christ’s words, “You are a city set on a hill which cannot be hid.” Nor these, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” Nor these, “He who with his mouth confesses, and with his heart believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” I cannot understand these passages, if you are never to avow your faith, but keep your religion hidden up in a secret place and go to Heaven by stealth! How much publicity, then, do we really think is necessary in a Christian? It is becoming that *he should make a public avowal of his faith*; he should come out from among the world and declare himself to be on the Lord’s side. There is an ordinance which God has Himself ordained, which is the proper way in which to make this profession—to be baptized in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—thus openly being buried in water to show our death to the world, and rising out of the water to show that we hope to live a new life as the result of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. If you should differ as to the form in which this profession is to be made, yet the profession should be made! If you would be honest and true, you must in answer to the Master’s summons, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” come out and say, “Here am I, Lord, I am Your servant, and I would serve You even to the end.”

You should also be *associated constantly with Christian people*. The one act of profession is not enough—it should be continued by union with some visible Church of Christ! We find in the Apostle’s days that those who were converted were added to the Church. It is written, “They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.” Christianity requires you to unite yourselves with those who are united to Christ. If the Church of Christ is the spouse of Jesus, you should seek to be a member of her visibly, as well as invisibly—especially you who are lately converted, for your presence in the Church is for your good, and much for the Church’s comfort. The man who was healed stood *with* Peter and John; and it is written, when they saw the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. The gathering together of the converts to sustain the minister is a very great help in the propagation of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! Besides this association with Christians, there should be *a daily carrying out of your Christianity in your life*. It is not all that we say that shines; that may be only a flash, a sparkle, a display of fireworks—it is our *daily* acting which is the true shining out of Christ within! Let the servant prove her Christianity by being more attentive than any other; let the master prove his by being more generous than any other master; let the rich man shine in his generosity; let the poor man shine in his patience. Let each in every sphere seek to excel those who are not in Christ, that so everyone may prefer us in our position to the worldling in the same office, and take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him!

But to shine as lights, we must add *the open testimony of our words*. I will not give a rusty nail for your religion if you can be quiet about it. I do not believe you have any! That which is nearest to the heart is generally most on the tongue; you must be constantly bearing your witness by the words of your mouth for Christ, seeking to teach the ignorant, to warn the careless, to reclaim the backsliding, and to bring the wanderers to the Cross! You will have many opportunities in the sphere in which you move—avail yourself of them all, and so shall you shine as a light in the *world*. And there are times when you cannot shine without *a very bold and stern decision for Christ*. When the old Roman senator, in the days of Vespasian, was told by the emperor that he might go into the senate house, but he must hold his tongue, he answered, “I, being a senator, feel impelled to go into the senate house, and being in the senate, it is the part of a senator to speak what his conscience dictates.” “Then,” said Vespasian, “if you speak you will die.” “Be it known to you, O Emperor,” said he, “that I never hoped to be immortal, nor did I ever wish to live when I might not speak my mind.” Brave Roman! We must have brave Christians, too, who say, “Being a Christian, it is mine to speak, and if that should cost me all I have, and life itself, I never thought myself immortal, and I wish to die when I may not speak out that which God has written in my heart.” There are times, I say, when if we should falter, or delay, we become traitors at once; make sure that in those “crises of your being,” you promptly follow your Lord.

So much of publicity I think is needed then—an open profession, a constant association with the Christian Church, a perpetual living out of godliness, an open declaration of the same, and a deliberate decision when occasion shall present itself. Look you, Sirs, Christians are *soldiers*! If our soldiers were to take it into their heads that they ought never to be seen, a pretty pass things would come to! What were the soldiers worth when they shunned parade, and dreaded battle? Take off your uniforms, and be packing, Sirs! We want not men who must always lie skulking behind a bush, and dare not show themselves to friend or foe! Christians are *runners* too, and what sort of runners are men who run in the dark? Not so, says the Apostle! He says, we are “encompassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses,” and therefore bids us, “lay aside every weight and the sin that does so easily beset us.” What? Running match and no spectators! Ave Imperator! The champion salutes you! He prays you to dismiss the spectators. Conscript fathers, leave your seats, and you knights of the empire retire from the race! You common herd retire, or put your fingers to your eyes—here comes a runner who is so dainty that he cannot be looked at, a swift-footed racer who must be scrutinized by no vulgar eye or he will faint, and lose the crown. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! the mob laughs. “Ah,” they say, “these are not the men to make a Roman holiday; these timid fools had better play with babies in the nursery; they are not fit to consort with men.” What do you think of Christians who must have the stadium cleared before they can enter the course? Rather, O children of God, defy all onlookers; crowd the seats and look on, you angels, and men, and devils, too—and see what you will! What does it matter it to the Christian, for he is looking unto Jesus! He runs not for you, but for the reward—and whether you look or look not—his zeal and earnestness are still the same! Christ is in him, and run he must, look on who will.

II. Secondly, here is in the text, USEFULNESS.

“Well” says one, “if I were known to be a Christian what use would it be?” We will soon show you. One remark, however, I will make—the better Christian you are, the more public you will be—but the less will be thought *of you*! You have noticed at night a star, it is only a little spark, but still it is very bright, and everybody says, “Do you see that star?” Yes, but there is a moon, why does not everybody say, “Look what a beautiful moon?” They notice the star first, because it is not usual to see stars so brilliant. By-and-by, of a moonlight night, you will hear people say, “What a lovely moon!” Now, in the daylight people do not say, “What a lovely sun!” No. “What a lovely landscape! What a beautiful view! Look at the tints of those trees now the sun is shining!” Just so, the little Christian is like a star, bright in his little sphere. Others are like the moon, they excite admiration and attention to themselves. But a full-grown Christian, who should be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, though giving more light than either the moon or the star, would not be half as much looked at, for men would be looking at what he shed light upon, rather than upon him! They would look to the Doctrine that he taught rather than to how he taught it; they would be looking rather at the lesson of his life than at the life itself. So that if I should urge you to more and more publicity, it will not be for *your* sake, but that you may be more and more forgotten, while the *Truth of God* is the more clearly seen!

But what is the use of lights, what is the use of Christians as lights? The answer is manifold. We use lights to *make manifest*. A Christian should so shine in his life that those who come near him can see their own character in his life, can see their sins, can see their lost estate; he should so live that a person could not live with him a week without knowing the

Gospel! His conversation should be such that all who are about him should perfectly understand the way to Heaven; things that men will not see and cannot see without him, should be very clear wherever he is. Men sometimes read their Bibles, and they do not understand the Bible because they need light. Like Philip, we should be willing to sit in the chariot and instruct the passerby, making manifest the meaning of God's Word, the power of God's Word, the way of salvation, the life of godliness, and the force of the Truth of God! May I ask each one of you, have you made men understand the Gospel better? "Ah," says one, "I leave that to the minister." Then you have neglected your duty—repent of your great sin and ask God, now, to help you to be making manifest to all persons who come near you their sin and the Savior! The next use of a light is *to guide*. The mariner understands this. When our sailors, some years ago had a Nore light, they thought they were getting on marvelously; but when they had the Mouse, the Maplin, the Swin Middle, and all the other lights on the sands, they soon found navigation much easier than it had been before. Every Christian should light some part of the voyage of life, and there should not be a channel without its light. Blessed pole star! How many a slave have you guided from the swamps and whips of the South up to the country of the free? Blessed are you, O Christian, if your light has led some soul to Jesus, to the land of the free, where the slave can never wear his fetters again! I hope that you have often, when men have scarcely known it, pointed them the way to Christ, by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Lights are also used for *warning*. On our rocks and shoals a lighthouse is sure to be erected. Christians should know that there are plenty of false lights shown everywhere in the world. The wreckers of Satan are always abroad, tempting the ungodly to sin under the name of pleasure. We must put up the true light upon every dangerous rock, to point out every sin, and tell what it leads to, so that we may be clear of the blood of all men, shining as lights in the world.

Lights also have a very *cheering* influence, and so have Christians. Late one night we had lost our way in a park not far from the suburbs of London, and we were walking along and wondering where we were. We said, "There is a light over there," and you cannot tell what a source of comfort that candle in a cottage window proved to us! I remember riding in a third class carriage, crowded full of people, on a dark night, when a woman at the end of the carriage struck a match and lit a candle—with what satisfaction was everybody's face lit up, as all turned to see it! A light really does give great comfort. If you think it does not, sit in the dark an hour or two. A Christian ought to be a comforter—with kind words on his lips, and sympathy in his heart—he should have a cheering word for the sons of sorrow!

Light, too, also has its use in *rebuking sin*. I think our street gas lamps are the best police we have. If those lamps were out, we would need 10 times the number of watchers, and there would be far more crimes. Why is it that thieves do not like the light?—because their dark deeds can only be done in darkness! And how is it ungodly men do not like Christians? Why, because they rebuke them; and just as lights tend to make a city safe, and stop robberies and crime, so Christians, when they are in sufficient numbers to act upon the commonwealth, will make crime less common—certainly they will compel it to hide its deformity under the shadows of night, whereas before it might have walked in the blaze of day with approbation! But the Christian is a light in a very peculiar sense—he is a *light with life in it*. Turn the lantern upon that dead man's face; you can see it cold and white, like the chiseled marble. Shoot the light right into his eyes; he does not see; you cannot make him live by the power of any human light! But the Believer is God's lantern, full of the Holy Spirit—and it happens often that through our testimony God shoots into the eyes of the dead a light which makes them live—so that the darkness of Hades gives way to the brightness of Glory, and the midnight darkness of the spirit is made to fly before the rising Sun of Righteousness!

We have dwelt long enough upon the uses of these lights, and I may only say, in concluding this point, I wonder what is the good of a Christian who is not thus useful to the world? He has a treasure but he hoards it! What is the good of misers while they live? They are like swine which only eat—they are of no service till they die; then they are cut up, and their estates are pulled into pieces; and perhaps some good may be gotten by those who gets something to eat from them. Vile is the wretch who hoards gold, but what is he who hoards bread? The world is starving, and they hoard the Bread of Life. It is like manna—it breeds worms and they cannot eat it themselves, but they will not give it to others. A religion that is no blessing to others, is no blessing to me—I am just laying up for myself a mass of putridity! It will never do my soul good, or else it would have compelled me to do good to others! But they are hoarding water, the Living Water; they are damming up the stream to keep enough for themselves, and what is it doing? It is covered with rank weeds! It breeds malaria; it turns foul; all manner of loathsome creatures are in it! There are more foolish still, they are trying to hoard up the light, as if they would have any the less if they let others have it! Hoard up light as if there were

only a scant supply. Infamous! Diabolical! I wish there were a stronger word than that, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha,” says Paul. And I question whether that dreadful anathema does not include within it those who do not love souls, and therefore prove they do not love Christ; if they loved Christ they must love sinners; if they loved Jesus they must seek to extend His Kingdom and to let Him see of the travail of His soul!

III. But time waits not for me, and I must proceed to touch with brevity upon the third point—POSITION INDICATED.

“But,” says one, “I cannot shine, it is of no use talking about it, I am not in a position to do any good.” The Apostle anticipates you. He says, “In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.” “If I were to remove from this,” says one, “I might serve the Lord’s cause, but I cannot where I am.” But, dear Friend, you are not to get out of it, you are to speak for your Lord where you are! In the *midst* of that crooked and perverse nation you are to shine as lights in the world. Your position teaches you three things. First of all, it should be *an incentive to you*. The worse the people are among whom you live, the more need they have of your exertions! If they are crooked, the more necessity that you should set them straight; and if they are perverse, the more need have you to turn their proud hearts to the Truth of God! The worse your position is, the more thankful you ought to be that you are in it. Where would the physician be but where there are many sick? Where is honor to be won by the soldier but in the hottest fire of the battle? Do not blame your position if you are an unprofitable servant, but lay the blame upon yourself! If you find it hard to do good where you are, it will be harder anywhere else. As the bird that wanders from her nest, so is the man who wanders from his place. Lazy workmen find fault with their tools and employers. If you transplant a tree to make it produce more fruit, you may possibly succeed, but there are nine chances to one that you will kill it altogether.

Again, as you are in such a position, let it *administer a caution* to you. They are a crooked and perverse nation, do not wonder, therefore, if they hate your light and try to blow it out. Be the more anxious not to give them any unnecessary offense; let your goodness be the only fault they can find in you! Ask the Lord to keep your lamp well trimmed for you; beseech Him to protect it from their malicious breath; be the more anxious to cultivate a close acquaintance with Christ, because a crooked nation would decoy you from Him. Do not try to please men—make not the opinion of this generation your rule, for it is very crooked—and if you travel one way, you will not please them unless you turn the other way, and then turn again to humor their crooks. One is often amused to find one’s self publicly abused for doing the very thing the opposite of which one was abused for the week before! And sometimes in the same newspaper article you will nowadays catch the writer first falling foul with you for doing one thing, and then falling foul with you for not doing it again! It is a crooked and perverse nation—the man who tries to please man shall find himself in a labyrinth of the most mazy kind; he shall be a wretched time server all his life, and a detestable hypocrite even to his death. Such a man, to use a rustic simile, is like a toad under a harrow—he will have to be crawling continually to escape the spikes on the right, and the iron ties on the left! And he will probably die a miserable death with the iron in his soul at the last. Be cautious, but be particularly cautious against excessive caution! Please the Lord, and let men please themselves.

Once more, while the eyes of perverse men should be an incentive and a caution to you, do not forget the *rich consolation* afforded by the fact that all the saints have endured the like trial. Are you in the midst of a crooked people? So was Paul. So was the Church at Philippi—so are all the saints! Remember that as they won their crowns in a strife which was none of their choosing, so must you; they were not carried on beds of down to Heaven, and you must not expect to travel more easily than they. They had to hazard their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, and you shall not be crowned till you also have endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; the road of your pilgrimage will not be smooth if it is the way of the Apostles and Prophets. Soft raiment, delicate nursing, dainty feeding, and luxurious ease belong to the palaces of earth—but not to the company outside the camp who bear their Lord’s reproach. I charge you, O servants of the Lord, and especially you who are members of this Church, stand fast, wait, watch and wrestle. Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!

IV. To conclude, there is an ARGUMENT SUGGESTED.

It is a very affectionate and touching one which I mean to take the liberty of applying to you, my beloved flock. “That I may not run in vain, nor labor in vain in the day of Christ.” The Apostle was the founder of the Church at Philippi; he had watched over them with all the anxiety of one who had planted and watered, and who looked for the increase. He therefore appealed to the affection which he knew they had for him. “I have run,” argues the Apostle, “with

all men looking on and gazing—many of them hating and scoffing. I have run with all my might; would you have me run in vain? I have labored, I have labored more than they all,” the Apostle could say, “would you have me labor for nothing?” He knew the answer they would give him would be, “No, beloved Paul, we would see you win the prize for which you did run, and reap the fruit for which you did labor.” “Well,” argues the Apostle, “but I cannot, except you shine as lights in the world! You disappoint my hopes, you snatch the prize from my grasp, you fill me with anguish, if you are not holy, heavenly-minded witnesses for Christ.” I use the same argument with you! To the stranger here today it will have no force, but with many of you I know it will be an argument of power. How many out of this congregation first learned of Jesus from my lips? A multitude of you were brought to Christ through the preaching of the Word here, or in Park Street, or the Surrey Gardens, or Exeter Hall. The Word was feebly preached in rough language, then, as now—but God acknowledged it—not to tens nor twenties, but to hundreds, yes, to thousands of you! And, by His Grace, not to you only—but to people in every land and of every kindred; the Lord has made my spiritual children as many as the stars of Heaven for multitude! I rejoice, yes, I must rejoice, when I hear continually of the multitudinous conversions which are worked by the Holy Spirit through the sermons both printed and preached! God is with us, and He does not let one Word fall to the ground! But what if you, as a Church, should be idle? What if your lives should be unholy? What if you should lack zeal and faith to testify for Christ? What then? My best expectations are defeated, my life has been a failure, and all that I have done falls to the ground! I have thought it in my heart, and I earnestly pray to my God that it may come to pass that here, as in a barracks, a great army may find its constant lodging place; that afterwards the Lord may pour you out like a vast conquering host, upon all parts of the world, to teach and testify, and live and labor, and speak for Christ! Surely, my Brothers and Sisters, you would desire this yourselves! I pray for it! Will you unite in desiring it and praying for it with me?

It has happened of late, especially to me, to see God’s hand very visibly. Never in my experience have I seen so much spiritual activity as just now, and while it is true of all sections of the Christian Church, it has been peculiarly so of that section over which it is my lot to preside. The sermons have been now for eight years scattered in English, Welsh, French, Dutch, German, Swedish—in fact, in all Protestant languages. At first there were many conversions—there still are. Next I find that those who were regular subscribers to the sermons begin to receive the Doctrine of the preacher; the converts to Christ grow and get clear views of the Truth of God; even in the point of Baptism there are great numbers who are convinced that it is most Scriptural that only Believers should be baptized! Very many have come here, and in the pool beneath, I have baptized them into the name of Christ. Our denomination does not increase. I am not very anxious that it should, for as it stands at present I have no great love for it; but our principles are spreading marvelously, and in this I must rejoice! As the result of this I have constantly letters like this, “Sir, Sir, I live in a village where the Gospel is not preached; there is a Church, it is true, but we have a Puseyite clergyman. Cannot you do something for us? You have many young men training for the ministry, could you not send a friend to preach in my drawing room?” Then comes another—“Sir, the Chapel has been shut up in our village a long time; could you not come and help us?” Then there are many of this kind—two Christian men write, wishing to be baptized into Christ—they come, they go back. Within a month there are four more from the same village. They go back and I almost forget them, but they do not forget me. Soon, the whole six will write a letter—this is a common thing—and say, “Could not we be formed into a Church? We will find a room—can you send someone to preach to us?” This happens every week, and your minister feels that as long as ever he has a man, he will say, “I will do it for you.” And as long as he has any money of his own he will say, “Oh, yes, I will do it for you.”

But every now and then he wishes that he had some who would stand by him in larger attempts. Cheerfully you give week after week for the support of our young ministers, and I think our friends will continue to do this. At any rate, the Lord will provide, and friends far away may be moved to assist us. I still need more aid, for the field is ripe, and we need more harvest men to reap it. It grows, the thing grows—every day it increases! It started but as a little flake of snow, and now like an avalanche it sweeps the Alps’ sides bare before its tremendous force! I would not now that you should prove unworthy of the day in which you live, or the work to which God has called us as a Church. Four Churches of Christ have sprung of our loins in one year, and the next year shall it not be the same, and the next and the next, if the Holy Spirit is with us, and He has promised to be with us, if we are with Him!

Now, in regard to the particular effort at Wandsworth, for which a collection is to be made. When I was sorely sick some three years or more ago, I walked about to recover strength, and walking through the town of Wandsworth, I thought, “How few attend a place of worship here. Here are various Churches, but there is ample room for one of our own faith and order. Something must be done,” I thought, “If I could start a man here preaching the Word, what good might be done.” The next day, some four friends from the town called to see me, one a Baptist, and the three others were desirous of Baptism, “Would I come there and form a Church?” We took the large rooms at a tavern, and preaching has been carried on there ever since! Beginning with four, the Church has increased to one hundred and fifty. I have greatly aided the interest by going there continually and preaching and helping to support the minister. Now, a beautiful piece of ground has been taken, and a Chapel is to be erected, and I firmly believe there will be a very strong cause raised. We have many rising Churches, but this one has just come to such a point, that a House of Prayer is absolutely needed. I should not have asked you for this aid so soon, but the rooms in which they worship are now continually used for concerts on Saturday evenings, and are not altogether agreeable on Sunday. I would just as soon worship in one place as another, for my own part, but I see various difficulties are now in the way, which a new Chapel will remove. I hope you will help them in so doing. Help me in the earnest effort of my soul to hold forth the Word of Life, and to let Christ’s Kingdom come and His will be done.

You who feel no desire to honor the Master—you who care nothing for the spread of His Kingdom—you who are satisfied to hold your heads down, and not boast and glory in Him—stand back and assist us not! But you who would help His Kingdom—you who love His name—you who are the debtors of His Grace—help the cause everywhere, and help it this day! For Christ’s sake, I ask it of you, and by His Grace you will not deny me!

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