

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

SHINING CHRISTIANS

A Sermon

Delivered by

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*“Arise shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.”
— Isaiah 60 : 1*

I believe that this text refers to the Church of God. I am aware that it is considered by some to have a special reference to Israel; but I also know that “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation,” and that this particular Scripture may be most justly and fitly applied to every child of God. I pray the Holy Spirit to bear witness to that fact, even while I am speaking, by applying the text to all believers who are assembled here.

The first word of it is “Arise.” There is much need, dear friends, that we should be, sometimes at least, aroused. Here are persons in the light; the day has dawned upon them, but they are fast asleep, so the trumpet is sounded in their ear, and the watchman shouts aloud, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come.” I believe that there are some

Christian men who have wasted a large part of their lives for want of somebody or something to wake them up. There is more evil wrought in the world by want of thought than by downright malice, and there is more good left undone through want of thought than through any aversion to the doing of good. Some Christians appear to have been born in the land of slumber, and they continually live in their native country of dreams. They rub their eyes occasionally, and suppose themselves to be wide awake; but they are in the Enchanted Ground, and though they know it not, they are little better than sleepwalkers the most of their days.

All of us may be conscious that, at times, we are startled into something better than our ordinary mode of life. We have been going on quietly, doing some good; but, all at once, we have been impressed with the value of an immortal soul, we have been struck with the nearness of eternity by the sudden death of a friend, or we have been aroused by the special application to our conscience of some eminently-powerful Scripture, or even the sight of some grievous sin has shocked us into holy action. For a time, we have been quite different from our ordinary selves, and those who have observed us have thought that there was more in us than they ever expected to see. Certainly, more came out of us than we had ever seen before; but, alas! we have soon slipped back into our former quiescent state until, perhaps, something else of an unusual character has happened, and startled us again. I have known some in whom, happily, the process of arousing has been a really effectual one. There came, once, to a meeting I was addressing, a brother who had been, for years, earnest after the ordinary fashion of Christian young men; and the Lord so guided me that I spoke about the usefulness that some men might acquire if they would but bestir themselves. I urged the desirability of some attempting to preach in the street, who might find their gifts abundant for that work, Well, this young man went back, and tried what he could do for Christ, and God greatly blessed him. That young man was Mr. W. P. Lockhart, of Liverpool, who is, at this moment, pastor of the church meeting in the Toxteth Tabernacle, a large edifice erected by the people whom he gathered by his preaching. Our friend has, with much acceptance, occupied this pulpit, and been of great service to our denomination; but, if it had not been for God's awakening him under that particular address, he might have remained just the ordinary trader that he was, serving the Lord in a very proper

way, but nothing noteworthy might have come of it. I wonder whether there is anybody here, who needs, as it were, to be dragged out, and impressed into the service of Christ,— some brother, perhaps, from Liverpool, or Manchester, or Birmingham, or Glasgow, or from this great London itself,— someone who is “not slothful in business,” yet not “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” Such a man may be, really, a fine fellow, with great capacity; but most of his talent is latent and dormant so far as the work of God is concerned. My dear friend, you have been sluggish quite long enough. Is it not time for me to cry to you, “Arise”; and is it not time for you to lift yourself up from that couch of indolence, and to say, “Yes, I have been hearing sermons for a good long while; I have been a member of a Christian church, and have been attending communions for many years; it is high time that I ceased from sloth, and began to do something to show that God is with me, and in me; and, by his grace, so it shall be”? Happy will the preacher be if that shall be the result of calling your attention to this first word of the text: “Arise.” We all need to hear the clarion call of Charles Wesley’s hymn, —

*“ Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through his eternal Son.”*

It is high time that all of us did arise. “Let us not sleep, as do others.” Loved by our God from all eternity, predestinated unto everlasting life, bought with the precious blood of Jesus, helped by the Spirit of God, and indwelt by him; it is indeed time that we did something worthy of our pedigree, something worthy of the price with which we have been bought, something worthy of the love which set us apart unto itself or ever the world was. I have no doubt that I am addressing some who do not lack grace; God has given them that. They are not without a saving knowledge of the truth; they *do* know Christ, but what they want is somebody to start them on a higher and nobler career. There are some who are just like Elijah’s sacrifice, with the wood all laid in order on the altar, and the bullock on the wood. O Lord, send the fire from heaven, that the sacrifice may be completely consumed! Let the man be given to thee as a whole burnt offering unto the Most High! It may be that this poor

weak hand may strike the match that shall set that sacrifice on a blaze. So may it be, and God shall have all the glory!

The text says, “Arise;” but then it goes on to say, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” In these words I see three things for me to do; First, *to remind you of your privilege*: “thy light is come;” secondly, *to rouse you to your service*: “Arise, shine;” and then, thirdly, *to rally you to this work*, by a few remarks which the context will suggest.

I. I am speaking now only to the people of God. There are some of you whose light has never come, but you are in darkness even until now. The Lord have mercy upon you; but, to God’s own people who have believed in the Lord Jesus, this is my first message, **REMEMBER YOUR PRIVILEGE.** Your light has come.

Recollect, first, *out of what darkness that light has delivered you.* You are no longer in the darkness of sin, the darkness of spiritual ignorance, the darkness of spiritual death; neither are you any longer in that darkness of distress and despair which might be felt. You are now in the light; but think a little while of what your state of darkness used to be. It is not so many years ago that there was a young man, who did not know his right hand from his left in spiritual things; he put darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; and that man, not so young now, knows the Saviour, he has learnt the evil of sin, and he has rejoiced in all the delights of pardon. Was that young man yourself? If so, you may well prize your present privileges. It is not so long ago that there was a man who was in the darkness of soul-agony. His sin was heavy upon him; God’s hand pressed him till all the moisture of his being seemed to exude, and he was like a plant withered in the long droughts of autumn. He cried to the Lord, but for a while he received no response to his petitions. He begged for mercy, but it did not come. Now, that same person is sitting here, thankful that he is pardoned, and that he knows how he has been delivered from the wrath of God, and he blesses that Divine Substitute who took upon himself his sin, and with it that sin’s penalty, and so delivered the guilty one from the wrath to come. Oh, what a change there is in that young man! That young man is yourself; is he not? Sister, it has been the same with you, too. Oh, what a difference there is between the knowledge which God the

Holy Spirit has imparted to you, and the blindness in which Satan held you captive! Oh, the difference between the misery into which conviction and despair had brought you, and the peace and restfulness which you feel at this moment through faith in Jesus Christ your Lord and Saviour! Is it not true that your light has come, and do you not bless God for it? Oh, methinks you must do so, and that you will use that blessed fact to help me in my argument when I come to enforce the lesson of the text: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come.” If God has given you light out of such horrible darkness, it well becomes you to shine to his praise as brightly as ever you can.

Please to notice, next, that *this light, which God has given you, is his own glory*: “and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Oh, but that is wonderful,— that God should not only give us light, but that that light should be his own glory. Creation is a part of God’s glory, but it is only a moonlight glory compared. with that of redemption. God, in the gift of Jesus Christ, displayed the whole of his nature. Creation is not a canvas large enough for the whole image of God to be stamped upon it. Byron speaks of God’s face being mirrored in the sea; but there is not space enough for the face of Deity to be fully reflected in the broad Atlantic, or in all the oceans put together. The image of God is to be fully seen in Jesus Christ, and nowhere else; for there you behold attributes which Creation cannot display. Creation can manifest love, power, wisdom, and much else; but how can Creation manifest justice, and justice lying side by side with mercy, like the lion and the lamb? It is only in Christ that you can see this wondrous sight,— God hating sin with perfect hatred, but yet loving sinners with much more than the tenderness of a mother towards her child.

It is upon you, dear friend, that this light of the glory of God has fallen. In your history, in your case, the glory of God’s attributes has been illustrated. You have seen it yourself in a measure, and others are also to see it in you. Your light has come, the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Henceforth, God’s glory is to shine through you; and in you, and by you, and through you, God shall manifest himself to angels and principalities and powers in the ages yet to come. I confess that I am talking about what I do not fully understand; I am quite out of my depth here. I see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but to describe it is quite impossible. When first I

saw the electric light, if you had asked me what it was like, I could only have told you something about its candle-power or its brilliance in comparison with gas, but I could not have made you understand it. But what is the electric light compared with the glory of the sun to one who sees it for the first time? And what are all the suns that could ever be created compared with the wondrous blaze of the glory of God? Yet such a marvellous light as that has fallen upon you, my brother, my sister,— “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

There is also this blessed thing to be said about this light; *you will never lose it*. I dwell upon that thought for a minute, that you may rejoice in it. Read the 30th verse: “Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” The light that God has given you will never be taken away from you. Ah! you have feared a good many times that it would be; but it never has, and it never will be. You have put your hand before your eyes, and then you have thought that the sun was blotted out; but it was not. Clouds have sometimes arisen between you and your God, but the light of his everlasting love has gone on shining all the while; so it always will. We bless God that we have not to preach to you of temporary salvation, a salvation that saves people for a quarter of a year, or that saves them for a few years, and then away they go back again to the world. Nay, nay, our comforts may be slower in the making than are those of others; but they last when they are made, for they are made by the grace of God. We are not saved by a sudden jump into something,— we know not what; — but by a new creation, by a new birth, by a total and radical change. Now, if the light of God has risen upon you in that way, so as to change your very heart, and the whole nature of your being, that light will go on shining for ever. Just drink in that thought. You have, by grace, laid hold of that which you will never lose; and One has laid hold of you, who will never let you slip out of his grasp, for it is written, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” I must not get on to that glorious theme of the final preservation of the saints, because it is one that always sets my heart leaping with delight whenever I turn to it; but I protest to you that, if you take away from me the doctrine of the final perseverance of the

saints, and all that is involved in it, I have not anything left that is worth keeping. I should not care about the gospel if that essential feature of it were gone; that truth seems to me to be the very soul of it,— everlasting love making an everlasting covenant, and taking the objects of that everlasting love into everlasting union with Christ, and giving them everlasting life by virtue of that union with him. So, believer, that light of yours will never burn out; it shall shine on for ever and ever. “Thy light has come,” and it shall never go away. Oh, joy, joy, joy! Let God be praised continually for such a blessed boon as this.

Now I must leave that part of my subject, only asking you to turn it over in your minds, and to rejoice if the text is true of you, “Thy light is come.” I wish that some here, who have been in the dark up till now, might know it to be true in their case, and each one be able to say, “I do believe, I will believe, in Christ Jesus as my Saviour.” If you do, your light has come.

II. But I am going to speak further to those who know that their light has come. Dear friends, as soon as ever you have received this light of the glory of God,— this very same light that makes heaven what it is,— this light which never will be dim, and which you will never lose,— I want to push you on to my second point, which is this, **TO ROUSE YOU TO SERVICE:** “Arise, shine; for thy light is come.”

A man cannot shine if he has not any light; but as soon as ever he has the light, what is he to do? Why, shine, of course; he must not put away his light as in a dark lantern, but the moment he receives it, he is bound to show it.

First, my dear friend, since your light has come, shine *by holy cheerfulness*. I am very sorry whenever I meet with Christians who have no joy. I am most of all vexed with myself whenever my own joy burns dimly, for we who have the light of the glory of God ought to have shining faces. We have been forgiven; we are God’s children; we are on the way to heaven; then, surely, if anybody’s mouth ought to be full of laughter, and if any tongue should be tuned to sweetest music, it should certainly be ours. There are none who have such a right to lead perfectly happy lives as Christians. I know that there are some who I cannot doubt are good people, but who are a very surly

sort of folk. Dear hearts, they will be all right when they get to heaven; but I should not like to meet a heaven full of them if they are in heaven as they are here. There are some persons who never can be content. Providence never pleases them; the weather is always wrong; their dinners are always ill cooked; nothing goes right, nothing has gone right with them for years, and they are very snappish and snarling. This style of living will not do, my brother. "Arise, shine." I would like to lay those words on your breakfast plate tomorrow morning. Before you go out to business, just put this passage between two pieces of bread and butter, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come." It may be that you will wake up in the morning rather gloomy, and you will say to yourself, "I have to go out and battle with the world again." Take this text, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come;" and say to yourself, "I must shine. Come, come, come, come, come; I must not let myself get down in the dumps, I must not begin the day mourning; God has given me light, so I must and I will shine to his praise and glory." May God help you to do it, for that is one way in which we can adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ our Saviour, by the cheerfulness of our deportment.

The next way of shining is *by a gracious godliness*. True Christians ought to shine by their lives. The stars do not say anything, but they keep on shining. Did you look up to the sky, the other night, and see Jupiter hard by the moon, and Saturn apparently just a little way off? There has been a wonderful beauty about various planets during the past month; perhaps never was the sky more interesting than it has been of late, but never a word was said among the shining bodies in the heavens. I kept company with the pole star, I think for twelve long hours; as I came travelling home from the South of France, I kept on seeing him out of the carriage window. He never said a word to me all the time; but one thing he did do, he continued shining; and I also gazed at all the stars of Ursa Major, as I remained wakeful the whole night long, but not a syllable did they say to me. They do not need to speak, for they shine. In like manner, you Christian people who cannot talk,— the women especially,— I mean that you cannot preach, you are not allowed to preach,— I want you to shine. Some people seem to think that there is no shining without talking, whereas the very best shining is that of Christian women, who, if they have little to say, have a great deal to do. They make the house so bright with heavenly grace, and decorate it so sweetly with

the flowers of their cheerful piety, that those round about them are won to Christ by them. Therefore, shine, dear brothers and sisters, by your gracious godliness, for so you will bring glory to God.

Then, thirdly, shine *by zealous earnestness*. We do not often meet with people who are too much in earnest. I can only thank God that I hear, in certain places, an outcry against fanaticism. We have been such a long time without it, so we may be almost glad to have a little of it, especially as the so-called fanaticism is probably only zeal thoroughly aroused. If there are some people who seem to be wildly enthusiastic, let us imitate them. We have had so much slumbering, so much coldness, so much death, that we can put up with a little extravagance and excess. Still it would be better if, judiciously, one went steaming straight ahead in the service of God with a resolution never to be beaten, never to cease every earnest endeavour to make known the gospel of Christ, and to reflect the light which has shone upon us from above. Oh, for a zealous earnestness! May God pour it out upon this church yet more abundantly! May you go into your Master's service with all your might and main, and may the Spirit of God, as a spirit of burning, rest upon every one of you far more abundantly than in the past!

This would lead, dear friends, to your shining *by a secret bravery*. There are some dear people whom I must encourage to be a little more bold. We have some friends, here and there, to whom I could hint, only very gently, that they are quite forward enough; but there are many good people who always keep in the background. They might do so much for Christ if only they had a little courage. Do, dear friends, break through the ice this year. If you have felt that you ought to do something for your Lord, and yet have never begun to do it, begin at once. Do you ask, "What is the best way to try to serve Christ?" Well, I think the best way is to do it. "But how should I begin?" Well, I would begin by beginning. "When shall I begin?" Begin now; this very hour. "But in what way?" In the first way that comes to hand. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," for our text says, "Arise, shine." If you have the light, emit it, distribute it, scatter it somehow or other. Have pluck; that is a plain English word, but I do not know how to put my meaning better. Have pluck enough to come out, and be a Christian; do not for ever be like a rat behind the wainscot, but come out, and own yourself on Jesus

Christ's side, and publish the everlasting gospel wherever you have the opportunity.

So runs the text, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come."

III. Now, in closing, I want TO RALLY YOU TO THIS SHINING BY ONE OR TWO ARGUMENTS.

And, first, *by the world's great need*. Read the second verse of this chapter: "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." Oh, the darkness and the deathshade over the people still! Over this London of ours there hangs a pall of deadly nightshade, a darkness that may be felt. Then, little glowworm, even you must not hide your light! Sparks, tiny sparklets, you that have but one little flash, you must not conceal it, for the night is dark, and the darkness deepens! The devil, drunkenness, and lechery, Jesuitism in all its forms, false doctrine, infidel teaching, scepticism in a thousand shapes, all these make night hideous, and further deepen the dense shades of darkness. You who have the light, do show it. If it is not the light, say so, and abjure it; but if it be the light, in the name of the eternal God, good man, I pray thee, let thy light be seen! Arise, shine; for darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.

Shine, next, because of *the great results that will surely come of it*. If all Christians were once to shine, and that means if *you* were to shine, and your next neighbour, and I and my next neighbour, and all of us were to shine, then it would come to pass that Gentiles would speed to the light, and kings to the brightness of the rising. Then, from all lands, and from the sea, would converts come, till nations should crowd to Christ, like flocks of doves flying to their dovecotes, and the Church of God would be multiplied beyond all count. We often keep from work for Christ because we despair of its success; we neglect effort because we are afraid that effort will be useless. Doubt no longer; he that bids you sow intends to give a harvest; and he will bless your sowing if you will but sow in faith. We may well be encouraged to do so when we think such thoughts as these, "Shine, for thy light shall be seen; shine, for thy light shall be useful to save life, like a lighthouse on the rock; useful to direct others home, like

the cottager's candle in the window, to guide her husband to his resting-place." Shine, then, because of the good that will come of it to the world.

Shine, next, because of *the great blessing that it will bring to the Church*; for, if all Christians shall rally to serve God as they should, then shall the Church have the days of her great glory: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The City of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." A shining church will be a happy church; if we do not shine, we shall be miserable. But if we will shine for Christ, we shall see great prosperity for the Church of the living God.

And, best of all, we must do this because of the argument used in the 21st verse. I will not speak upon it, I shall leave it with you: "*that I may be glorified.*" It is God your Father who says that, it is Christ who has bought you with his blood who says it, it is the Holy Ghost who is your indwelling Comforter who says it. There is no argument that eloquence could state, or that reason could suggest, that can have such force with a loyal heart as this,—"*that I might be glorified.*" Do you not pray, "Father, glorify thy Son"? Now, in the power of the Holy Spirit, prove the sincerity of your prayer by giving out whatever light God has given to you; and, since your light has come, arise and shine, as you have ability, from this very hour. The Lord grant it, dear brothers and sisters, to me and to you, for his name's sake! **Amen.**

CHRIST IN HIS PEOPLE

(A hymn by C.H. Spurgeon, based on the words :

"Ye have done it unto me" — *Matt 25:40*)

Jesus, poorest of the poor!
Man of Sorrows! Child of grief!
Happy they whose bounteous store
Ministered to Thy relief.

Jesus, though Thy head is crowned,
Crowned with loftiest majesty,
In Thy members Thou art found,
Plunged in deepest poverty.

Happy they who wash Thy feet,
Visit Thee in Thy distress,
Honour great, and labour sweet,
For Thy sake the saints to bless.

They who feed Thy sick and faint
For Thyself a banquet find;
They who clothe the naked saint
Round Thy loins the raiment bind.

Thou wilt keep their soul alive;
From their foes protect their head;
Languishing, their strength revive,
And in sickness make their bed.

Thou wilt deeds of love repay;
Grace shall generous hearts reward
Here on earth, and in the day
When they meet their reigning Lord.

Suggested Tunes : 'University College' or 'Buckland'