“They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

That is the testimony of an old man, and one who had the richest and deepest experience of any man living on the face of the earth at the time. He was taken down to Babylon when a young man; some Bible students think he was not more than twenty years of age. If anyone had said, when this young Hebrew was carried away into captivity, that he would outrank all the mighty men of that day; probably no one would have believed it. Yet for five hundred years no man who succeeded in history shone as did this man Daniel. He outshone Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Darius, and all the princes and mighty monarchs of his day.

We hear people nowadays talking about the hardness of the field where they labor; they say their position is a very peculiar one. Think of the field in which Daniel had to work. He was not only a slave, but he was held captive by a nation that detested the Hebrews. The language was unknown to him. There he was among idiomaters; yet he commenced at once to shine. He took his stand for God from the very first, and so he went on through his whole life. He gave the dew of his youth to God, and he continued faithful right on till his pilgrimage was ended.

Notice that all those who have made a deep impression on the world, and have shone most brightly have been men who lived in a dark day. Look at Joseph; he was sold as a slave into Egypt by the Ishmaelites; yet he took his God with him into captivity, as Daniel afterwards did. And he remained true to the last; he did not give up his faith because he had been taken away from home and placed among idolaters. He stood firm, and God stood by him.

Look at Moses who turned his back upon the gilded palaces of Egypt, and identified himself with his despised and downtrodden nation. If a man ever had a hard field it was Moses; yet he shone brightly, and never proved unfaithful to his God.

Elijah lived in a far darker day than we do. The whole nation was going over to idolatry. Ahab and his queen, and all the royal court were throwing their influence against the worship of the true God. Yet Elijah stood firm, and shone brightly in that dark and evil day. How his name stands out on the page of history!

Look at John the Baptist. I used to think I would like to live in the days of the prophets; but I have given up that idea. You may be sure that when a prophet appears on the scene, everything is dark, and the professing church of God has gone over to the service of the god of this world. So it was when John the Baptist made his appearance. See how his name shines out today! Eighteen centuries have rolled away, and yet the fame of that wilderness preacher shines brighter than ever. He was looked down upon in his day and generation, but he has outlived all his enemies; his name will be revered and his work remembered as long as the church is on the earth.

Talk about your field being a hard one! See how Paul shone for God as he went out, the first missionary to the heathen, telling them of the God whom he served, and who had sent His Son to die a cruel death in order to save the world. Men reviled him and his teachings; they laughed him to scorn when he spoke of the crucified One. But he went on preaching the Gospel of the Son of God. He was regarded as a poor tent-maker by the great and mighty ones of his day; but no one can now tell the name of any of his persecutors, or of those who lived at that time, unless their names happen to be associated with his, and they were brought into contact with him.

Living for God

It does not say in Daniel 12:3 that the statesmen are going to shine as the brightness of the firmament. The statesmen of Babylon are gone; their very names are forgotten.

It does not say that the nobility are going to shine. Earth’s nobility are soon forgotten. John Bunyan, the Bedford tinker, has outlived the whole crowd of those who were the nobility in his day. They lived for self, and their memory is blotted out. He lived for God and for souls, and his name is as fragrant as ever it was.
We are not told that the merchants are going to shine. Who can tell the name of any of the millionaires of Daniel’s day? They were all buried in oblivion a few years after their death. Who were the mighty conquerors of that day? But few can tell. It is true that we hear of Nebuchadnezzar, but probably we should not have known very much about him but of his relations to the Prophet Daniel.

How different with this faithful prophet of the Lord! Twenty-five centuries have passed away, and his name shines on, and on, and on, brighter and brighter. And it is going to shine while the church of God exists. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12: 3).

How empty and short-lived are the glory and pride of this world! If we are wise, we will live for God and eternity; we will get outside of ourselves, and will care nothing for the honor and glory of this world. In Proverbs 11:30 we read: “He that winneth souls is wise.” If any man, woman, or child by a godly life and example can win one soul to God, their life will not have been a failure. They will have outshone all the mighty men of their day, because they will have set a stream in motion that will flow on and on forever and ever.

Called to Shine

God has left us down here to shine. We are not here to buy and sell and get gain, to accumulate wealth, to acquire worldly position. This earth, if we are Christians, is not our home; it is up yonder. God has sent us into the world to shine for Himâ€”to light up this dark world. Before Christ went up on high, He said in effect to His disciples: “Ye are the light of the world. Ye are My witnesses. Go forth and carry the Gospel to the perishing nations of the earth.”

So God has called us to shine, just as much as Daniel was sent into Babylon to shine. Let no man or woman say that they cannot shine because they have not so much influence as some others may have. What God wants you to do is to use the influence you have. Daniel probably did not have much influence down in Babylon at first, but God soon gave him more, because he was faithful and used what he had.

Remember a small light will do a great deal when it is in a very dark place. Put one little tallow candle in the middle of a large hall, and it will give a good deal of light.

Then we must remember that we are to let our light shine. It does not say, "Make your light shine." You do not have to make light to shine; all you have to do is to let it shine.

I remember hearing of a man at sea who was very seasick. While this man was sick, he heard that someone had fallen overboard. He was wondering if he could do anything to help to save the man. He laid hold of a light, and held it up to the porthole. The drowning man was saved. When this man got over his attack of sickness, he went on deck one day and was talking with the man who was rescued. The saved man gave this testimony. He said he had gone down the second time and was just going down again for the last time, when he put out his hand. Just then, he said, someone held a light at the port-hole, and the light fell on it. A sailor caught him by the hand and pulled him into the lifeboat.

It seemed a small thing to do to hold up the light; yet it saved the man’s life. If you cannot do some great thing you can hold the light for some poor, perishing soul, who may be won to Christ and delivered from destruction. Let us take the torch of salvation and go into the dark homes, and hold up Christ to the people as the Savior of the world. If the perishing masses are to be reached, we must lay our lives right alongside theirs, and pray with them and labor for them. I would not give much for a man’s Christianity if he is saved himself and is not willing to try to save others. It seems to me the basest ingratitude if we do not reach out the hand to others who are down in the same pit from which we were delivered. Who is able to reach and help drinking men like those who have themselves been slaves to the intoxicating cup? Will you not go out this very day and seek to rescue these men? If we were all to do what we can, we should soon empty the drinking saloons.

Do Not Be a Cause for Stumbling

A blind man was found sitting at the corner of a street in a great city with a lantern beside him. Someone went up to him and asked what he had the lantern there for, seeing that he was blind, and the light was the same to him as the darkness. The blind man replied: “I have it so that no one may stumble over me.”

Dear friends, let us think of that. Where one man reads the Bible, a hundred read you and me. That is what Paul mea
nt when he said we were to be living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. I would not give much for all that can be done by sermons, if we do not preach Christ by our lives. If we do not commend the Gospel to people by our holy walk and conversation, we shall not win them to Christ. Some little act of kindness will perhaps do more to influence them than any number of long sermons.

Keep the Lower Lights Burning

Let us keep our lights in the proper place, so that the world may see that the religion of Christ is not a sham but a reality. It is said that in the Grecian sports they had one game where the men ran with lights. They lit a torch at the altar, and ran a certain distance; sometimes they were on horseback. If a man came in with his light still burning, he received a prize; if his light had gone out, he lost the prize.

How many there are who, in their old age, have lost their light and their joy! They were once burning and shining lights in the family, in the Sunday School, and in the church. But something has come in between them and Godâ€™ the world or self â€“ and their light has gone out.

Reader, if you are one who has had this experience, may God help you to come back to the altar of the Saviorâ€™s love and light up your torch anew, so that you can go out into the lanes and alleys, and let the light of the Gospel shine in these dark homes.

Far-reaching and Lasting Influence

If we only lead one soul to Jesus Christ we may set a stream in motion that will flow on when we are dead and gone. Away up the mountainside there is a little spring; it seems so small that an ox might drink it up at a draught. By and by it becomes a rivulet; other rivulets run into it. Before long it is a large brook, and then it becomes a broad river sweeping onward to the sea. On its banks are cities, towns and villages, where many thousands live. Vegetation flourishes on every side, and commerce is carried down its stately bosom to distant lands.

So if you turn one to Christ, that one may turn a hundred; they may turn a thousand, and so the stream, small at first, goes on broadening and deepening as it rolls toward eternity.

There are many mentioned in the Scriptures of whom we read that they lived so many years and then they died. The cradle and the grave are brought close together; they lived and they died, and that is all we know about them. So in these days you could write on the tombstone of a great many professing Christians that they were born on such a day and they died on such a day; there is nothing whatever between.

But there is one thing you cannot bury with a good man; his influence still lives. They have not buried Daniel yet; his influence is as great today as it ever was. Do you tell me that Joseph is dead? His influence still lives and will continue to live on. You may bury the frail body of clay that a good man lives in, but you cannot get rid of his influence and example. Paul was never more powerful than he is today.

Do you tell me that John Howard, who went into so many of the dark prisons in Europe, is dead? Is Henry Martyn, or Wilberforce, or John Bunyan dead? They who lived for something else besides themselves will never die out of the hearts of those for whom they lived and labored.

Is Wesley or Whitefield dead? The names of those great evangelists were never more honored than they are now. Is John Knox dead? You can go to any part of Scotland today, and feel the power of his influence.

I will tell you the ones who are dead. The enemies of these servants of Godâ€™those who persecuted them and told lies about them. But the men themselves have outlived all the lies that were uttered concerning them. Not only that; they will shine in another world. How true are the words of the Bible: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

Let us go on turning as many as we can to righteousness. Let us be dead to the world, to its lies, its pleasures, and its ambitions. Let us live for God, continually going forth to win souls for Him.

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"Where one man reads the Bible, a hundred read you and me. That is what Paul meant when he said we were to be living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. I would not give much for all that can be done by sermons, if we do not preach Christ by our lives..."

Lord Jesus, continue to save your people from their sins, cleanse us from all hypocrisy, heal us of our backslidings. Soon of the Father in truth and love, manifest Your own life through us more with every day.