

Beacons of the Bible

By [Henry Law](#)

1869

PREFACE

To the citizens of Gloucester

Dearly Beloved,

Allow a few words to premise my purpose in thus approaching you.

I am constrained by feelings fervent--affectionate--deep-seated. Let gratitude be first named. I should indeed be heartless, if I were untouched by kindness: and I should be worse than heartless, if not moved exceedingly, when kindness is exceeding. I came a stranger to you, but I received not a stranger's welcome. Expecting courtesy, I was met by friendliness. Advancing days have not diminished this happy brotherhood. Increased communion augments my weight of thankfulness. Acknowledgment then is due. I give it as I can. To give it as I would, baffles my power.

Next, duty bids me thus speak. I owe you service in the holiest sense. I hold a spiritual office. I am here to promote the interests of your immortal souls. All other purposes of residence among you vanish before this absorbing thought. I am placed in your midst to help you on a heaven-ward course. I have indeed no priestly eminence. The Gospel knows no priest, except Jesus within the veil at God's right hand. My highest station is to be your servant in the Lord. My highest work is to minister to you God's Word. My highest privilege is to deal closely with your souls. My highest happiness is to win these souls to Christ. Hence the main efforts of my lip and pen are rightly yours. In partial payment of this debt, I draw near in these pages. If they, the Spirit helping, should do Christian work, your claims will not be wholly undischarged.

Next, intense desire should not be silent. Duty is a cold term for ardent feeling. A lukewarm ministry is a withering blight. It is an iceberg in the Church. It freezes and deadens. But can lips be cold which speak of heaven--of hell--of never-dying souls--of God's everlasting love in Christ! With such themes hearts should glow--words should burn--arguments should put forth giant-strength--entreaties should agonize. Every faculty should grapple with individual men, refusing to let them go until they give themselves to God in Christ. I sincerely would show such longing towards you. Away with indifference when such interests are at stake! If you

should not be saved, your life is misery--your death is ruin. Your trade may prosper--your health may flourish--your friends may smile--outward advantages may abound. But the end is near. What will that end be! I know this. Can I then speak with chilly apathy? I would that these pages, as a flame of strong desire, could reflect the Savior's zeal.

These are the feelings urging me to present a series of Beacons to you. The subjects are wholly scriptural. The Bible is the mine supplying every stone of the simple fabric. On each is inscribed, "Thus says the Lord." Thus I would call your minds to the study of God's Word. The Bible is the richest treasure of the world. Without it the palace is a dark blank. With it the humble cottage sparkles with celestial light. It is the transcript of God's heart. It tells, what reason is weak to find, our Heavenly Father's will. It is pure truth without one shade of error. The Spirit's pen composes the whole. It gives knowledge on all things needful for time and for eternity. It is a safe guide through life's entangled path. It is a compass through shoals and rocks--amid winds and waves--to heaven's eternal rest. The sage is ignorant without it. The peasant learns from it salvation's road. It is a solace for every hour. It is a companion always ready to converse. It cheers when other comforts fail. It is arrayed in every charm for intellect. It never wearies. It is always fresh. Its oldest truths cannot grow old. Its readers become more wise--more holy. Other books may puzzle and corrupt. This is from heaven, and leads to heaven. This enters the heart with purifying grace. The Savior prays, "Sanctify them through your truth: Your word is truth:" John 17:17. Hence I would win you to be Bible-students. What, if the study so enchants and so enchains, that other writers, in comparison, are paled! You become gainers in understanding and joy. In the place of earthly things surrendered, you receive a heavenly substitute. Man's silence is no loss, if God arise and speak.

Next attention is here called to Genesis. Where all is marvelous and all divine, no part can have surpassing worth. But this book asks primary notice, as the oldest history in the world. It reveals wonders otherwise forever hid. The Prince of Reformers deliberately said, "There is nothing more beautiful, nothing more useful." I pause not to enumerate its special charms. But I may truly state, the more you search, the more your minds will wonder, and your hearts will love. Read it as literally true. Then no human philosophy will beguile. Ponder its characters. You will find on them the intrinsic stamp of truth. You will soon feel, the pen which depicts is not of man. He only who made the heart can thus anatomize.

Object not, that I select the dark side of each picture. Sin must be known, before the grace of God can be prized. The remedy is not for the healthy. My first purpose is to unmask sin. I would show it, as our direst enemy--the cause and origin of all our woe--the spring of misery in earth and hell. Thus I present a mirror exhibiting its dreadful prevalence. I take this stand to deepen abomination of this evil. But mistake me not. I urge you not to flee sin--that by sinlessness you may earn heaven. This would indeed be to mock man's misery--and to offer

poison in a deluding cup. Would he not be mad, who bade gravestones to move--or nature to frame wings to soar above the skies! I would be madder, if I taught, that sin hated was sin expiated--if I proclaimed, that present doings could undo past guilt. Our best is but deficiency. Deficiency has no surplus of merit--but rather desert of wrath. No! I would scare from sin, that you may seek refuge in Christ. These pages will attain their end, if by the Spirit's help, they bring you from sin--from self--from each vain confidence to Him. All perish who are not one with Him. This oneness in individual souls is only by faith--the gift of grace--the Spirit's mighty work.

Accept, then, these Beacons as assurance of sincere desire that you should be the happiest among the happy--the most joyous among the joyful--the most holy among the holy--the most godlike among the godly--the most saintly among the saints--the most heavenly-minded among the heavenly--the most glorious among the glorified. This state of grace will be in proportion as you dwell in Christ, and Christ in you. May your souls be wholly swallowed up in Him! Then your sins are all forgiven--and blessed will be life's little speck--glorious will be heaven's eternal day.

I know you dwell amid grand reminiscences and holy privileges. You boast that Hooper was yours, who witnessed in flames for Christ's pure cause--that Miles Smith was yours, who gave us, rendered in our own tongue, a large portion of God's Word--that the noble Whitfield was born your citizen--and aged men still tell of your Ryder's saintly walk. Your admiring eyes rest on a splendid church--the county's pride. The frequent bell calls you to public prayers. Let these things be duly valued. But they are mere externals, and as such fall short of grace. Husks are not the fruit, although they may hold it. Salvation is an inward work. May it be yours! May He whose love sent Christ to save, smile savingly on you! Among the redeemed may none outshine you in the crown of Jesus!

I have the honor to be,

Your faithful servant,

Henry Law, May, 1868

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