

Call to Obedience #296
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The World Is No Brighter Than the Lights of God's People

By Reimar Schultze

Jesus said to his followers, "*Ye are the light of the world...*" (Matt. 5:14). This is a rather astonishing statement. The implication is that if you and I don't shine, our world will remain in spiritual darkness. Whether there is light in your home or at your job or in your ministry is up to you. If we, as Christians, don't shine for Jesus, there is moral darkness—there is no guiding light for the struggling, sinking sinners to find their way home into the harbor of God's safety. This is expressed so well in an old gospel hymn by Philip Paul Bliss called *Let the Lower Lights Be Burning*:

Brightly beams our Father's mercy From His lighthouse evermore,
 But to us He gives the keeping Of the lights along the shore.
 Let the lower lights be burning! Send a gleam across the wave!
 Some poor fainting, struggling seaman You may rescue, you may save.

(*Let the Lower Lights Be Burning*, by P. P. Bliss, Great Songs of the Gospel, Moody Press, 1945, hymn 41)

Oh, oh, oh, what a statement of our Lord: *you* are the lights of this world! What a challenge! What a responsibility! What a calling! What we have to answer for on the Day of Judgment! For if we don't warn the wicked, his blood shall be required of us on that great last day (Ezek. 3:18; 33:8). If we don't keep our lights burning, we shall be shut out forever from the marriage feast of the Lamb. Jesus, in his Parable of the Ten Virgins, said that five of them were wise and five of them were foolish. The foolish virgins let their lights burn out, and they found no entrance into God's eternal rest (Matt. 25:1–13). Is it any wonder that John Wesley, the great saint and founder of Methodism, said after years of studying the Bible: I have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a half-way Christian. Surely that is so! It does not even matter whether your light has shone in the past or not—it must shine now!

When Jesus gives us the light, **we** are responsible to keep it burning as the Parable of the Ten Virgins tells us. We must keep it burning for our sake and for the sinner's sake. Oh, how dangerous is the Calvinist doctrine: All of Grace and none of us! If misinterpreted, it can lead to spiritual laziness like that of the foolish virgins who found the door shut at the midnight hour.

Truly, this little chorus could have come out of that Parable of the Ten Virgins:

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm
 gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
 Shine all over... I'm gonna let it shine...

Jesus said, "*Ye are the light of the world.*"

Now you may say, "Did not Jesus say that he was the light of the world?" (John 8:12). Yes, he did. He was the light of this world as long as he was physically present in

it—but when he left, he made his followers the lights of the world. He ignited them with the precious Holy Spirit abiding within them.

Let us take a little journey on this.

Jesus was the first light in this dark world. When he came to this world, the apostle John said, *“And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”* (John 1:5–9).

Observe that the word *Light* here is written with a capital letter. The light here refers to the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus came as the spiritual light of the world. There is absolutely no spiritual light on this planet but that which is of Jesus. Some people believe that there is spiritual light in some philosophies. Others think there is some light in other religions. But I have to tell you that there is no spiritual light in anything but that which is of Jesus. All spiritual light originates from him as all rays of physical light emanate from the sun. As there is no physical life for us without sunlight, there is no spiritual light for us without Jesus.

Jesus came as the light of the world. But then he said to his disciples, *“Yet a little while is the light with you...While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light”* (John 12:35–36). Jesus said this toward the end of his ministry as he entered Jerusalem to be crucified, buried and to rise again to ascend to his Father in heaven.

What does he mean by this, *“While ye have light...”*? Is the light going to leave them? What does he mean by saying, *“...that ye may be the children of light”*? When was this *little while* going to be over in which he would no longer be with his disciples as the light of the world, and that his disciples would become his children of light? Well, that takes us back to Matthew where Jesus said, *“Ye are the light of the world.”*

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:14–16).

What a tremendous, illuminating truth! Jesus told his followers: “I am leaving. I am the light of the world, and as I am leaving this world, from now on, I let my light shine through you. And if you shine, there will be light wherever you are.”

To be practical, think of it this way: Jesus is the great generator—the spiritual power-plant—and we are the light bulbs. As long as we abide in him and he abides in us, we shall shine. Yes, *“Ye are the light of the world.”*

Of course, this light is not to be wasted; it is not to be put under a bushel basket or under a bed where it becomes ineffective. It is to be put on a candlestick, on the dining room table, where it will dispel all the darkness in that room and where all who come will see it as they freely move about the room.

When you are at work, let your light shine, especially if you are the only Christian there. If your light does not shine, it will be a serious matter for all those souls around you. But you say, “Pastor Schultze, it is so dark there at work.” Well, don’t you know that the greater the darkness, the brighter the light will shine? Hallelujah! You are the light of the world, so let your light shine in such a manner that others may see it. Oh, how bright will your light be if all the workers around you curse and swear and tell dirty stories? How bright will it shine for Jesus? What will your light do in first convicting, then convincing, then in lovingly drawing some soul into the harbor of God? *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works...”*

Dear student, how bright will your light shine in your classroom of unbelievers or mediocre professors of the faith? A high school teenager wrote me that she has a few Muslim students in her class. Their parents are attracted to her. She is the only girl that dresses modestly, that is kind and sweet and has the light of her Lord on her countenance. These Muslims asked her what she had that made her different. She said, “It is Jesus.” They responded, “We wish all the students were like that, that all Christians would be like that.” These dear Muslims accepted an invitation to go with this little warrior of the Lord to her church Christmas program.

Friends, there are struggling, sinking sinners all over who are looking for a light to take them out of the darkness. Indeed, at first they may make fun of you. They may test you and try you to see if you are true. They may put you through the fires of affliction. But, oh my friend, stay with it—keep pouring oil into your lamp—and your time will come when they will respond to your light. The time will come when that one who cursed you will have a dying mother and ask for prayer. The time will come when that one who made fun of you will have a brother who was crippled from a motorcycle accident and will now go to you for encouragement. The time will come when that one who ridiculed your religion will be found with cancer and long for your friendship. Yes, the time will come when those persecutors will be put into the fires of affliction themselves, and they will not look for a fool but for a man or woman who can reach God. They will look for a light, a ray of hope, a lifeguard with a spiritual rope or boat. They will come to you—the only light in that place—and say, “I am sorry for how I treated you, but now I see that you are the only one in this place I have confidence in that God will hear. Will you pray for me?” And, indeed, you may respond, “Yes, I shall.” Or better yet: Yes, I shall pray for you, but it would be so much more effective if you became a Christian too so we could pray together, for wherever two or three are gathered together in Jesus name, he will be in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

You are the light of the world. Your church is no brighter than her believers. Your village or city is no brighter than the Christians within its boundaries. Your nation is no brighter than the disciples of Jesus in that nation. If they don’t shine, if they don’t witness in the love of Jesus, there will be spiritual darkness and the absence of moral restraints.

Will you right now give your heart anew to Jesus and let him shine through you? There are no other lights in the world today than that of his sacred people.