

# BEING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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In Mark 4:21-23, Jesus said, “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” In his sermon on the mount, the Lord similarly taught: “*Ye are the salt of the earth*: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. *Ye are the light of the world*. A city that is set on a 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” (Matt 5:13-15). As Christians, one of our major purposes is to be the light of this world.

## Good works

Righteous Lot is described in the scriptures as being “vexed” by the filthy behavior of the wicked. He was “dwelling among them” and vexed “from day to day” in hearing and seeing their “unlawful deeds” (2 Pet 2:7-8). It is not difficult to see many parallels between our world today and wicked Sodom and Gomorrah of Lot’s time. This is nothing new. Indeed, 1 John 5:19 says, “And we know that we are of God, and *the whole world lieth in wickedness*.” On his last night on the earth, Christ prayed that his disciples would not be *of* the world while they are *in* the world: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:15-16). From the Lord’s perspective, it is clear that for this time, there is a good reason for us to be here in this world, and that is to be the light of the world. Philippians 2:15 teaches us to be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, *in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world*.” In Matthew 5:16, Christ teaches us how to shine as lights in this world: “Let your light so shine before men, *that they may see your good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Here, our *deeds* are represented by the light of a candle, which is to shine before men. Our spiritual heart is the source of our thoughts, words, and deeds (Matt 12:34-35; 15:17-20; Mark 7:18-23; Luke 6:43-45). Therefore, to be a proper source of light to this world, our hearts need to be purged from all evil and formed in righteousness. Luke 11:33-36 says, “No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore

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(continued)

when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. *If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.*"

Therefore, the more we grow spiritually, the better light we will be in this world. But even in youth, Christians are instructed to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12).

## **Spreading the Gospel**

Philippians 2:15-16 tells us to "shine as lights in the world; *holding forth the word of life*. Therefore, another important aspect of our serving as lights in this world is to teach the gospel of Christ. In Ephesians 3:10-11, we learn that it is "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known to this world "by the church." Thus, God intends to use Christians as the vehicle to spread His word throughout the world.

The "Great Commission" commands us to go make disciples of all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20; see also Mark 16:15-16).

Romans 10:13-14 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Our job is to be able to teach, patient, "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim 2:24-26). Therefore, we must "*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*" (1 Pet 3:15). When we properly function as the light of this world, God will be glorified (Matt 5:16). Our example may win some to Christ (1 Pet 3:1-2), and spreading the gospel is certainly designed to do that. But even those who do not respond to the light during this life will "glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet 2:12). And it is the role of the Lord's church to bring God glory "throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph 3:21).