

LETTING OUR LIGHT SHINE

Jon Macon

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.”* On several different occasions, our Lord taught us about the importance of letting our light shine. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ 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. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matt 5:13-16).

Being an example of a believer in Christ

Luke 8:16-17 says, “No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.”

Our deeds are represented by the light of a candle. The purpose of a candle is to provide light for people to see (see also Matt 5:15-16; Luke 11:33-36).

Christians are to be “the light of the world,” and cause men to glorify God for the good works that we do (Matt 5:14-16). Thus, we must be a good example to others in what we speak and do. To the young man Timothy, the inspired Apostle Paul wrote, *“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1 Tim 4:12).

What we do and what we don’t do

Sometimes what Christians do *not* do provides light to the world. “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: *wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you*” (1 Pet 4:3-4). A Christian’s words must always be according to what Christ teaches (Col 3:17), and the distinction in our language from the world is very apparent. “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:5-6). Philippians 2:14-16 reminds us that even by refraining from complaining, we can shine as lights to the world: “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons

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(continued)

of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.” The latter part of that passage shows another important way in which we have a responsibility to be the light of the world, by holding forth the word of life. We need to let our light shine by teaching others the gospel of Christ (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Rom 10:13-15; 2 Tim 2:24-26).

All light with no darkness

To be a truly effective light to the world, we must grow spiritually. 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 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.*” This is the goal and the growth process described by Jesus Christ in Luke 6:43-45: “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” Our task is to purge out all that is dark (evil), and have only light (good treasure) to shine forth from our hearts by our words and deeds.

All glory to God

But letting our light shine does not mean doing our works to be seen of men, to receive the glory of men. We must not seek or receive man’s glory and praise (Matt 6:1-18; 23:1-14; John 5:40-44; 12:42-43; Acts 12:21-23; Rom 2:29; 1 Thes 2:3-6). When men see the good works that we do, they will glorify God (Matt 5:16). They may “ask us a reason of the hope that is in us,” and we must always be ready to provide the answer (1 Pet 3:15). Some might even be won to Christ by our example (1 Pet 3:1-2). But even if those who see our Christian behavior refuse to glorify God in this life, they certainly will glorify God on Judgment Day for what we have done in serving our Master (1 Pet 2:11-12). All the good deeds that we have done for the Lord in this life will be revealed on Judgment Day (see also Eccl 12:14; Matt 6:3-4,6,17-18; 25:31-40; Luke 8:16-17; Rom 2:16; 1 Tim 5:25). We will be rewarded for these deeds and God will be glorified.