

*Encourage  
One  
Another.*



*You are the Light of the World*



*I LOVE YOU!*  
*BE HAPPY*



*"...encouraging one another, and  
all the more as you see the Day  
drawing near."  
- Heb 10:25*



**The Berean Lamp**  
*For the Body of Christ.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Welcome

by Scott Moller - Page 3

### Unashamed (poem)

by Jesse Larsen - Page 3

### Flickering Lights in a Darkening World

by Nathan Warner - Page 4

### This Long Night (poem)

by Nathan Warner - Page 7

### Lives of the Christians - Page 8

### Waiting on the Lord

by Natalie Madsen - Page 8

### Apostasy (poem)

by Jesse Larsen - Page 9

### Children of Light

by Jani Lynn Warner - Page 10

### Art Page - Page 11

### Sing a New Song - Page 12

John Newton: Amazing Grace  
by Maggie Moller - Page 12

### The Hard Way

by Bob Larsen - Page 14

### Stage Lighting in the Night

by Nathan Warner - Page 15



The Berean Lamp Newsletter is a publication of the Berean Lamp Ministry. Visit our website at [www.bereanlamp.org](http://www.bereanlamp.org). The Berean Lamp Ministry is a service of the Berean Christian Fellowship of Zimmerman, MN



## Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of the Berean Lamp Newsletter. This work is the culmination of a desire that God has placed on my heart for several years. It is a desire to minister to the Body of Christ and to be a witness to the unsaved. God has called believers to encourage one another and to spread His Gospel message.

It is my firm belief that we live in what the Bible describes as the “Last Days.” This is the period of time leading to the “Blessed Hope” of the return of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul warned the Church in II Timothy 3:1 that these last days would be perilous times.

Jesus described these times in Matthew 24. He spoke of the signs and deceptions that would mark this age. He did not want His followers to be unaware of the season or to become overwhelmed by their circumstances. He encouraged them in verse 6 not to become alarmed because these things must happen. Many Christians may become discouraged or fearful as they see these world events unfold. This need not be if we fix our eyes on Jesus and realize that our salvation is near. Jesus encouraged His disciples in Luke 21:28 to lift up their heads and look up for their redemption when they saw these signs.

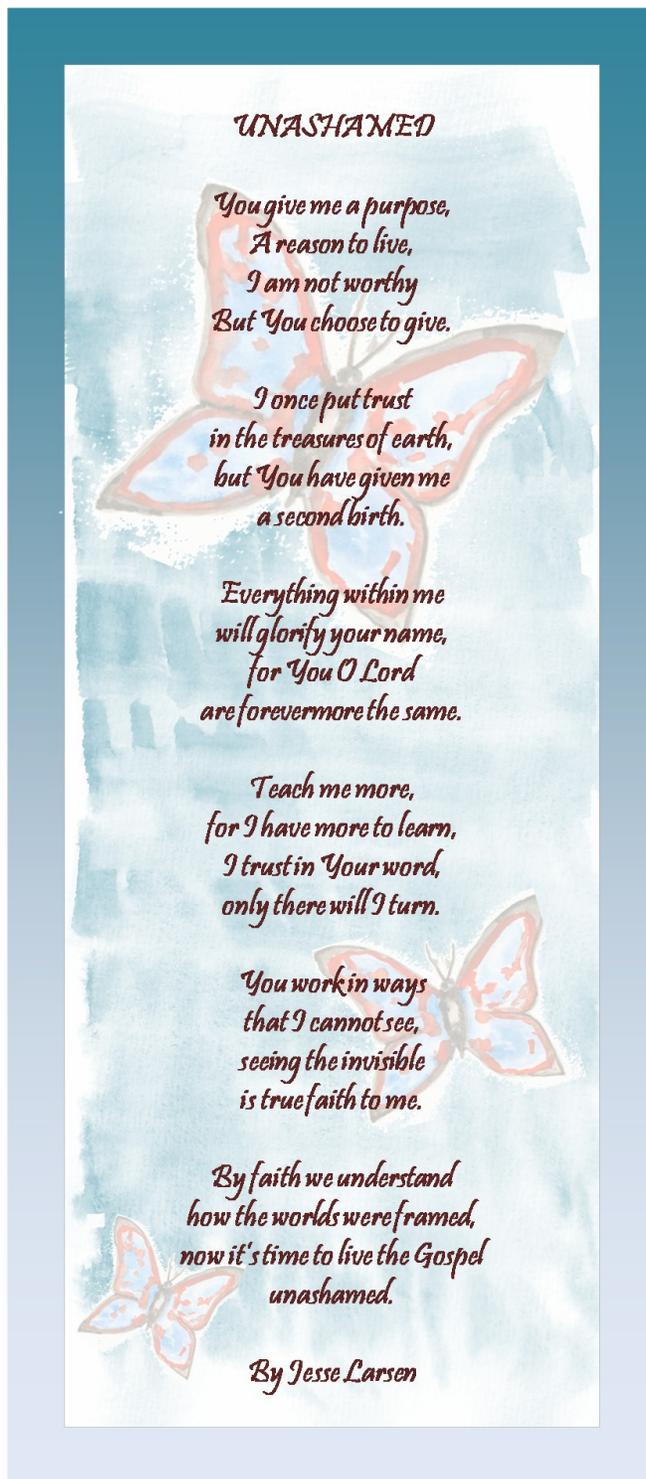
If you have an interest in these matters, please take the time to subscribe to the Berean Lamp newsletter at our website: [www.bereanlamp.org](http://www.bereanlamp.org). It is free of charge and you may unsubscribe at any time. The newsletter will be published monthly and will be distributed primarily by e-mail at this time. Submissions, comments, questions and prayer requests are all welcome.

If you would like to make a submission, please review our “Submission Guidelines” first. It would also be greatly appreciated if you would forward this newsletter to friends and family that might be encouraged by this work. We hope, with your assistance, that a great number of people may be reached and encouraged and you will find the content of these newsletters and the associated website encouraging as you continue in your walk of faith.

We are exhorted in Hebrews 10:25 “encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Let us be like Paul who declared in Philippians 3:14 “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

In the Name of Jesus Christ,

Scott F. Moller  
Pastor of Berean Christian Fellowship  
Zimmerman, Minnesota



## Flickering Lights in a Darkening World

By Nathan Warner

*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. - Mt 5:14-16*

### *The Children of God are the Light of the world*

The Berean Lamp website and newsletter is a lamp-stand of sorts – a digital menorah for the light of the true Church to shine before others, revealing and witnessing against the deeds of darkness, offering encouragement to fellow believers (the Body of Christ), and glorifying our Heavenly Father. While we do this in our personal lives and as a body, the limited time we have together each week hinders the opportunities we have to share our spiritual gifts and encourage one another. We hope that this website will encourage the body to grow together into deeper fullness with Christ and burn more brightly in our relationship with Him and each other.

In the darkening world around us, the small lights of each believer, young and old, strong and weak, will shine more brightly to the unaccustomed eyes of the world. The old divides we once thought were political, social, and economic (and all that seemed but shades of grey) may become more clearly the intrinsic divides they truly are between Christ and the god of this world – between light and darkness.

Let us shun the extinguishing ways of discouragement, encouraging one another at every hour and burning more brightly at every watch of the night in anticipation for our Lord's return as in the parable of the ten virgins.

*"...at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup> Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps...the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut." – Matt 25:6&10*

You and I, and all believers, bear Christ inside of us – the Light of Life. He is Light to the world. So intrinsic is this nature of God that John begins his gospel by establishing that Jesus is that Light:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the*

*light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

*<sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." – John 1:1-9*

Later, Jesus identifies himself as the Light:

*<sup>12</sup> "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" – John 8:12*

Clearly no man or woman is the Light, but Jesus himself shines in us as a testament and witness against the god of this world who loves darkness:



**“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”**

*“In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God...For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” – 2 Cor 4:4 and 6*

Jesus tells us to become children of light by believing in the light.

*“The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” – John 12:35-36*

Jesus further tells us what light means to believers and nonbelievers, revealing the intrinsic difference between the Faithful and the wicked.

*“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”* – John 3:19-21

We should desire to walk in the light and seek to keep ourselves clean from the world so we will have no reason to remain in any shade of darkness. The world clothes its works in darkness that no one would see what wickedness is done by it, but darkness conceals wickedness only in the absence of light. The Lord is clothed in light as the psalmist says: *“You are clothed with splendor and majesty, <sup>2</sup> covering yourself with light as with a garment.”* – Psalm 104:1b-2a.

At His approach, darkness is cast out revealing the wickedness thought secure under its mantle. Light reveals that darkness is no covering at all except in God’s absence. Paul underscores this

*“...when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,*

*‘Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.’*

*<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”* – Ephesians 5:13-16

### ***Believers as Vessels for the Light***

During Pentecost, light, like flames descended on the believers when they received the Holy Spirit: *“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* – Acts 2:1-4

On that day, the believers appeared physically as they were spiritually – vessels for light.

Jesus told the Apostle John in Revelation that the Churches were lampstands (or candlesticks depending on the translation) standing before Him.

*“As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”* – Rev 1:20

Surrounding Jesus in his glory are his churches described as implements which are made to bear His light. The church is a place for Christ’s light to shine, encour-

aging one another and radiating that light to the world. The church throughout history has borne this light in the darkness, revealing the works of sin – a testament and witness against the works committed in darkness. Because it reveals the true nature of things, great persecution has come upon it throughout history as Jesus said: *“For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”* – John 3:20. The angel in Revelation warns of a time when the light of the church will be removed from spiritual Babylon, most likely during the rapture when the voice of the Bridegroom (Holy Spirit) will also be removed.

*“...the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.”* – Rev 18:23



**“You are the light of the world,”  
- Matt 5:14**

### ***The Dividing Nature of the Light***

But for now, the church is in the world as a witness to the Light. The very presence of Christ’s light in us is a testament against the darkness. It divides wherever we go and as such we encounter much rejection and persecution from those who choose to live in darkness. Many believers have been troubled, frustrated, and discouraged that the Gospel has not brought peace in their human relationships. Sometimes we are ashamed by the

divisive nature of Christ, discouraged by what we seem to lose because of it. Christ's presence in us can make our lives uncomfortable and threaten our human relationships.

Each year, we are reminded around Christmas time that the angels sang "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" – Luke 2:14 (NKJV) at Christ's birth. So, isn't God supposed to bring peace on Earth? In our relationships? I like how the ESV translation puts it: <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

True peace comes only through accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior. Jesus clearly taught that he did not come to bring peace in a human sense until His return.

*"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. <sup>36</sup> And a person's enemies will be those of his own household."* – Matthew 10:34-36

The sword here is the Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God (Eph 6:17), *"piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* – Hebrews 4:12.

To veil the light is to put it out. Each of us is tempted from time to time to "put aside differences" and has done so to "get along" with our neighbors. We are never to seek discord or pick a quarrel, but to put aside the difference of light and darkness – to veil Christ in our hearts is to deny Christ. We should be wary of compromise that denies Christ and weigh the cost of our salvation against the trifling prices of the world's marketed affections.

But regardless of this truth, standing for the Light and being rejected and reviled for it can bring us great discouragement. What happens to the Church when it becomes discouraged or troubled? Does our light flicker? When we experience persecution, do we hide the light? How does the Church keep the light of the gospel shining in the face of Satan's relentless assault to stifle it in a rapidly darkening world?

### ***Encourage One Another***

We are told in Hebrews to encourage *"one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching."* – Hebrews 10:25b. The Day of His return is always approaching when His light will encompass all things and there will be no longer any place for darkness to hide. Each day, it draws nearer, closer.

It is not easy for any of us to be living in such dark times, especially when we are required to interact with the world. Some of us may even feel that to be in the world is to compromise Christ, but to be human is fundamentally to be "in the world, but not of the world."

We must encourage each other to hold fast to the

Faith. Let us encourage one another more and more each day. Let us remember that the night is often described as darkest just before the dawn and as the day grows, we are to put on the light as armor, clothing ourselves with Christ.

*"...you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works*



*"'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.'" – Ephesians 5:13-16*

*of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."* – Romans 13:11-13

In closing, let us recall how Paul compares himself, you, and I to the clay vessels used as lamps to hold oil and bear light before men in the darkness of the world, showing the surpassing power of God shining through our human frailty.

*"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of dark-*

ness, ' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ' But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ' We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ' persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ' always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ' – 2 Corinthians 4:6-10

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” – John 16:33

We have these assurances. Let us, therefore, encourage one another to shine more brightly at every waking moment in the hours, days, and weeks of night that may be before us.

In Jesus name,  
Amen.



*THIS LONG NIGHT*

*Given the darkness of the ages  
Given the length of this long night  
The pressure is slowly building  
Against the dawning of the Light.*

*The faithful crowd round their candles  
Ah, the warmth recalled to sight  
They've waited for so long  
But to their eyes it seems so bright.*

*The shadows deepen, darken  
There now seems so little hope  
But the lamps burn more brightly  
On the hills of Jerusalem's slope.*

*"What is the hour this time of night?"  
A pilgrim asks who's travelled far  
"It is the hour awaiting Sight."  
Some children say who hold a star.*

*In their hands it gathers light  
Building towards the dawn  
The darkness shivers, falling back  
Until its strength is gone.*

*"You who have stood watch  
Arise and now look out  
Your King is come in Glory  
With Love that casts out doubt."*

*Where is the Enemy now?  
His strength that felt so near?  
Through Night's web of shadows  
He wove the world in fear.*

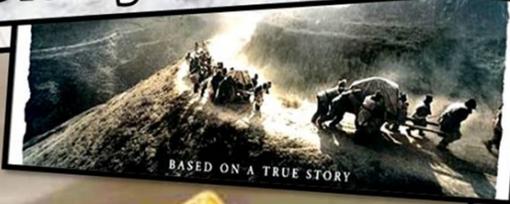
*The past is now over  
Our Brother is returned  
The thorns that choked His garden  
Are taken to be burned.*

*"Come and enter My rest  
You good and faithful friend  
The crown of Life awaits  
And Love that has no end."  
By Nathan Warner*



Lives of the Christians

Gladys Aylward



The Small Woman



I sat on my luggage – miserable, cold and hungry – somewhere near the Manchurian border with not a soul in sight. I thought I would freeze to death, and for the first time real doubts came to my mind. ‘O God, is it worth it?’ I cried. Like a flash came the answer: ‘Be not afraid, remember I am the Lord.’ So I prayed that God would show me what to do and deliver me – and He did...”

–Gladys Aylward – *The Little Woman*



Gladys Aylward was a poor English maid in her twenties when she felt called by God to China for Christ. None of the mission churches would sponsor her – “it’s too dangerous for a woman without any qualifications and no education.” they all said. But Gladys was determined. In 1930 she spent all the money she had on a railway ticket from England through war torn Manchuria to China. She had no friends or money and could not speak the language. God brought her through the difficulties to great responsibility in the new land. She learned Mandarin, became a Chinese citizen, an official advocate against foot-binding, singlehandedly stopped a bloody prison riot, endured the Japanese invasion of China, led 100 orphan children 200 miles through the mountains to safety and withstood the Communist persecution of Christians that followed.



See the film *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* starring Ingrid Bergman and read Gladys’ autobiography, *The Little Woman*

Waiting on the Lord

- A Devotional -  
By Natalie Madsen

*“I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the LORD.”*

Psalm 40:1-3

Once I heard about a young man who wanted to find out what the Lord’s will for him was. He decided, “I’ll open up the Bible randomly, and the passage I point to will tell me God’s will.” So he opened his Bible, pointed at a passage, and read, “And Judas went out and hung himself.” *Hmm*, the young man thought. *Surely, that isn’t the Lord’s will for me.* The young man decided to try again. Once more, he opened the Bible to a random spot, pointed at a passage, and read it: “Go now and do likewise.”

Many times in my life, I have desired to know the Lord’s will for me, and sometimes I get anxious when

He carries in telling me. For me, I want to know it now, so I can pursue certain things or put an end to other things. However, the Lord has been recently laying on my heart the importance of *waiting on Him*.

Psalm 62:1-2 says, *“My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.”* If we wait for the Lord, He is faithful to deliver us. I have always had difficulty overcoming worry, but the Lord has been reminding me lately that when I *wait* for Him, I am placing my complete trust in Him, and He will not let me “be greatly shaken.” His decisions may not be what I want, but when I fully surrender to His plans, I can have faith that His ways are best. If we postpone our wishes and rely on His wisdom, we don’t have to guess at God’s will.

As James 4:8 says, *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”* We are all called to purify ourselves - clear our consciences - repent from sin. When we draw nigh to the Lord with a clean heart, He promises to draw nigh to us.

As I have been thinking about waiting for the Lord,

He has reminded me of the importance of some very simple yet vital points in diligently seeking His will.

**Prayer** – How can we learn and discern God’s will if we do not spend time in the presence of our Heavenly Father? How can we expect to hear His voice if we never take the time to listen for it? Do not only speak, open your heart and *ask* Him to give you discernment to hear what He has to say. (Psalm 139:17-18)

**Reading His Word** – Just as we cannot easily travel to an unknown destination without a map, we cannot easily reach the place where God wants us unless we read the “map” that He has given us. If we are driving without using a map, we usually end up taking a longer amount of time to get to our destination, and sometimes our route is more hazardous than if we went by the map. Likewise, if we ignore the Word He has given us, we can take a much longer time coming to the place God wants us, and we might find some hazards that we would have missed if we’d stayed in the refuge of the center of His will. (1 Peter 2:1-2)

**An Open and Willing Heart** – A friend of mine once said, “If you had to choose between two volunteers to serve for a certain purpose, whom would you choose - the one who willingly asked to serve or the one who didn’t bother asking?” Instead of simply hoping to see if the Lord will use us, we should be constantly *asking* Him to use us and disregarding our wants while seeking His guidance. (Isaiah 6)

**Repentance and a Clean Heart** – If we have our focus on worldly things or sins that we hang on to, we cannot be fully dedicated to the Lord’s work. Let us shake off “the affairs of everyday life” and seek Him solely. (2 Timothy 2:4)

**Complete Trust and Reliability in Him** – Commit yourself fully to Him! Wholly surrender yourself to His purpose. Then when you wait for Him, you have confidence that His promise is truth and His way is pure, no matter what trials come up. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

**Listen Unceasingly** – Pray for discernment and a hearing heart; spend time in His Word and alone with Him in prayer. We should be listening and yearning for His voice. Pray for patience and a receptive heart as you depend on Him only. (Habakkuk 2:3-4)

What I have learned is that when I wait for Him, I’m not simply setting my future in His hands and sitting back, passively waiting for an immediate response or direction. It’s a continual act of *true* obedience and surrender, and I’m using my time before He sends me where He wants me to go to grow in knowledge of Him and to delight in my Shepherd. Just this week, I have felt so much security, confidence, and joy as my King is teaching me once again to diligently delay *my* wants and seek Him, keeping my heart open for His answers. I challenge you to place sweet trust in Jesus Christ and pursue His kingdom and righteousness by waiting on Him. I pray that you will be encouraged by the strength and joy He provides!

*“The LORD’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,*

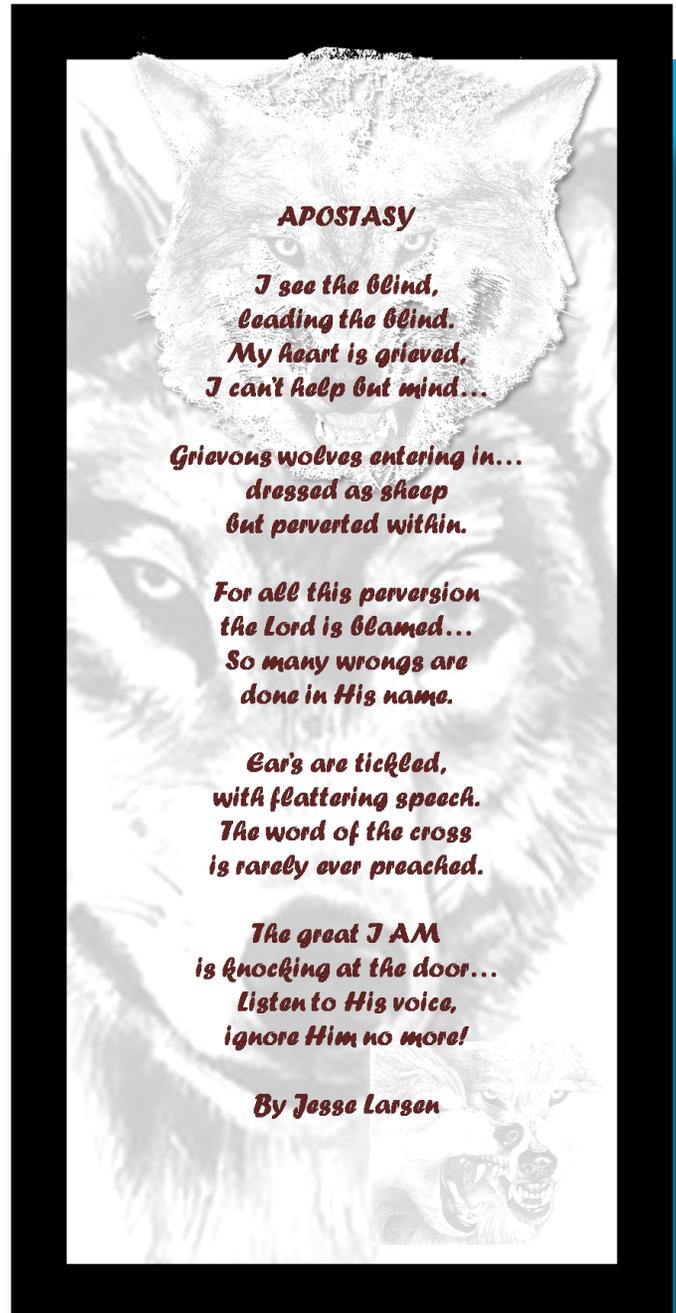
*for His compassions never fail.*

*They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*

*‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I have hope in Him.’*

*The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.”*

Lamentations 3:22-25



## Children of Light

By Jani Lynn Warner

*“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not become partners with them; <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.” - Eph. 5:6-11.*

We live in dark times, surrounded by lies and deceptions. As children of light, how do we escape deception? God warns us in Ephesians that we are to “let no man deceive us with vain words.” When I read that verse I think, “What a responsibility God has given us!” I also remember that this is nothing new. After all, Eve let Satan deceive her.

At one time, I sympathized with those who have been deceived. I used to think, “Well, it’s not their fault, is it?” But I began to realize that when we are deceived, we may actually be more at fault than we think. The reason Eve believed Satan was because she really didn’t believe God. John states, “...he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36b)

As children of light, we must pray, watch and guard ourselves from being deceived. God has given us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, to help us. I try to remember to ask God to show me truth and life when I read the Bible. But it shouldn’t end there. I need to pray for His discernment on every subject in whatever medium information is presented. We call this medium of information the media.

Since we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, God can show us if something is unfruitful and will hinder His light in us. We can ask Him to help us understand and evaluate what the presenter, author, or artist wants us to believe, to feel, or to do. Do they want to help us fix our eyes on Jesus or fix our eyes on the world and the god of this world who blinds “the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,” – 2 Cor 4:4.

More forms of media surround us today than at any other time in the known history of the world. We have access to radio, TV, internet, CD’s, videos, videogames, advertisements, billboards, etc. Let’s guard ourselves from the wrong fellowship with media.

Many times in Scripture God warns us about idols made of wood which cannot speak or hear. In Romans 1:22-23, we are told that unthankful people who didn’t glorify God “became vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts were darkened.” They “changed the

glory of an incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts and to creeping things.” Today we see images moving and speaking everywhere - on video, computer, and TV screens. Images are given words on billboards, packaging, and book jackets. From whose heart do these images arise—a heart filled with the light of God, or a foolish, darkened heart? What do the authors and artists want us to believe, to feel, and to do?

Finally, let’s pray for boldness to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness. In our culture, we are encouraged to tolerate many things that are against God’s Law. When we tolerate something, we do not object to it. We need to remember to ask ourselves this question: What are we being asked to believe, feel, and do by tolerating ideas and behaviors that we know from Scripture are harmful?

Many times I have found myself sympathizing with an individual or movie character who is portrayed in a difficult situation. But feeling sympathetic, patient, or longsuffering in such situations may open the door to deception. We may think we are showing Christian virtues, but instead we may be tolerating sin. Asking God to help us guard our emotions at all times is essential.

### Practical Exercise:

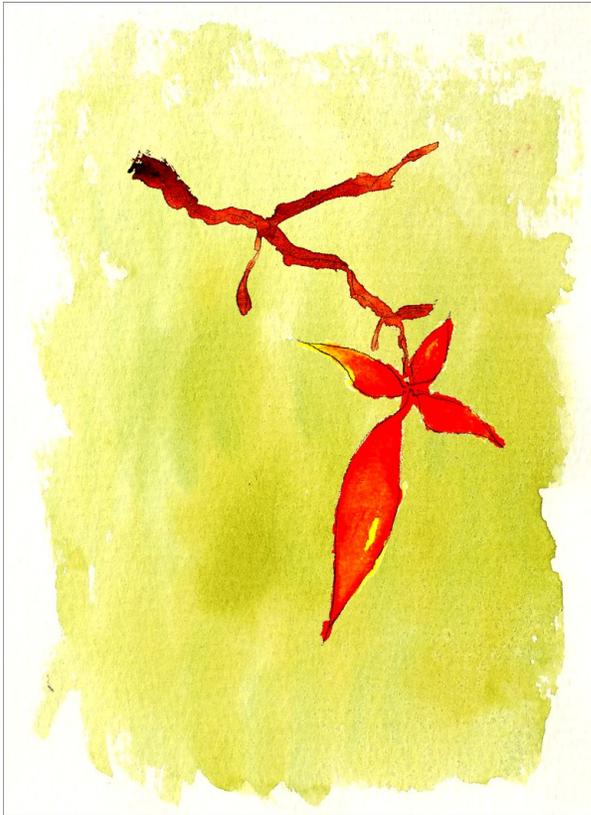
Use a notebook, 3x5 cards, or computer to exercise discernment when you view or hear material.

Ask God for understanding. What does the author or artist want you to believe, feel, and do. In all media, there is a message for the viewer. In God’s media, the Bible, that Message is His character and His Good News, the Gospel. Evaluate the messages, whether they are in words or pictures. Are you being asked to fellowship with light, darkness, or a mixture of light and darkness?

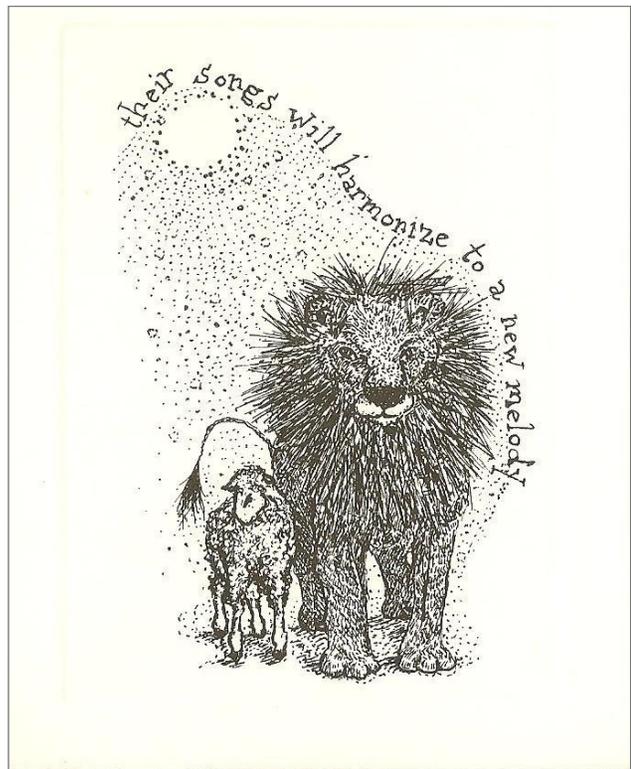
Decide whether to accept or reject the material. What is your “fellowship?”

This is also an instructive habit to begin with children, including very young children. But whatever our age, we are all children of God and need practice!

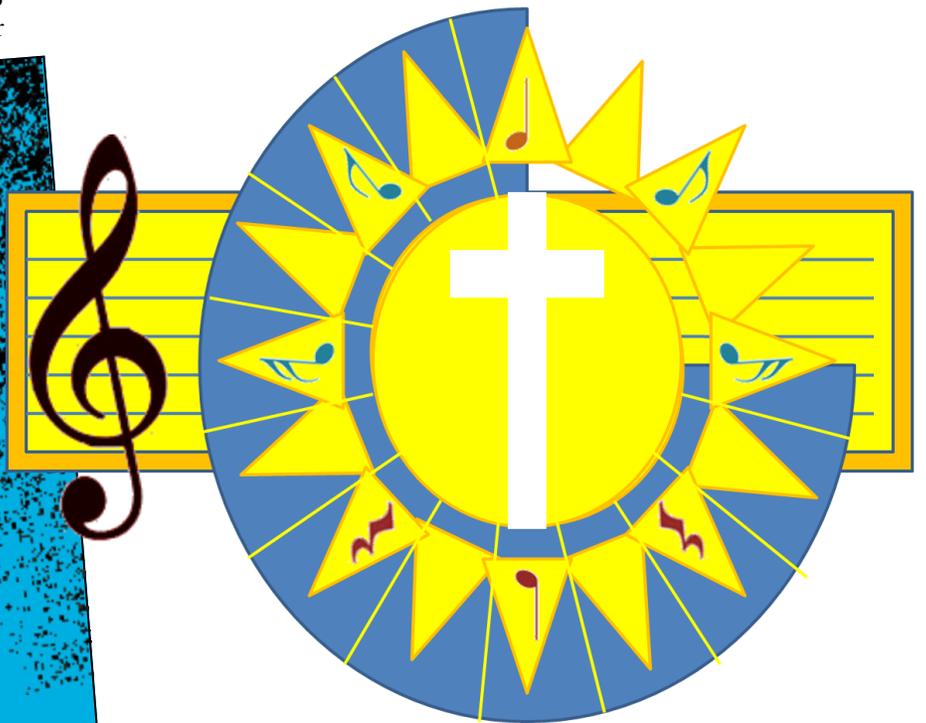




**Autumn Cross**  
By Nathan Warner

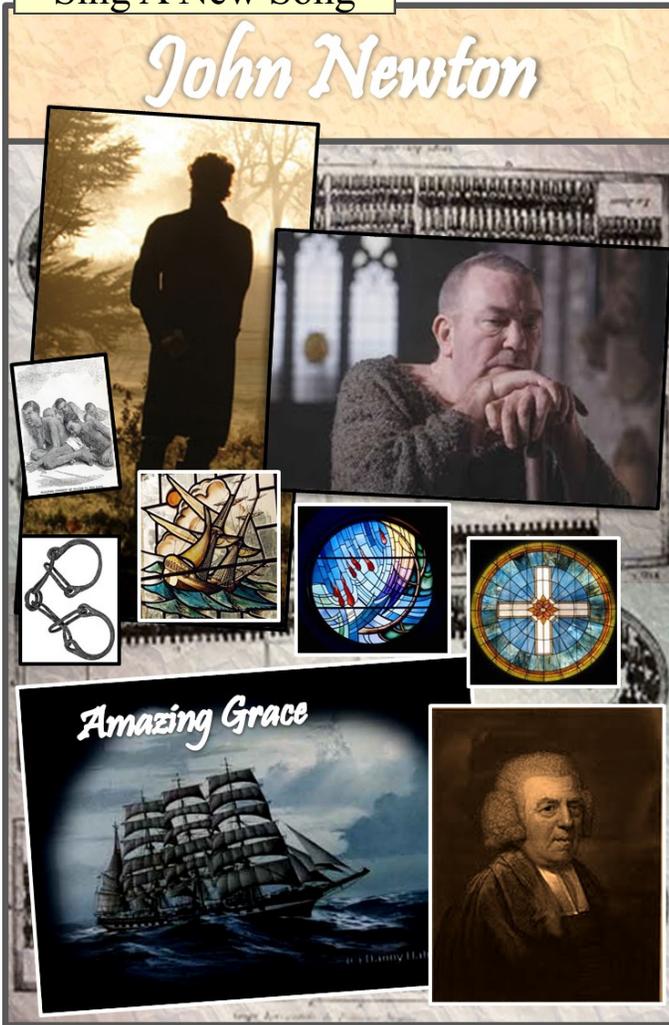


**The Lamb and the Lion**  
By Lynn Warner



**"And they sang a new song," - Rev 5:9**  
By Nathan Warner

Sing A New Song



### Amazing Grace

I CHRONICLES 17:16-17  
John Newton, 1725-1807

Early American Melody  
Harm. by A.C.L.

1. A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound That saved a  
 2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my  
 3. Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares, I have al -  
 4. The Lord has prom - ised good to me, His word my  
 5. Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail, And mor - tal

wretch like me! I Once was lost, but  
 fears re - lieved: How pre - cious that did  
 read - y come; Tis grace hath brought me  
 hope se - cures; He will my shield and  
 life shall cease, I shall pos - sess, with

now am found, Was blind, but now I see.  
 grace ap - pear The hour I first be - lieved  
 safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.  
 por - tion be As long as life en - dures.  
 in the veil, A life of joy and peace. A - men.

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## John Newton: Amazing Grace

By Maggie Moller

*“Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what He has done.”*

*Psalm 9:11*

*“Sing to the Lord, praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day.”*

*Psalm 96:2*

Nearly everyone knows the famous hymn “Amazing Grace”. But not everyone knows the story about the man who penned these famous words.

John Newton was born in London, England on July 25, 1725. His mother was a devout Christian woman, and she tried to teach young John the importance of following God. Sadly, his mother’s Godly influence ended with her death when John was only 6 years old. Since John’s father was a sea captain, he had been raised almost completely by his mother due to the long absences from his father.

Shortly after his mother’s death, John’s father remarried. His new stepmother did not want to be bothered

with raising her husband’s son, so she arranged for John to be sent to boarding school. While he was at the school, John became friends with the other boys. Many of these boys were very wild and soon taught John to cheat and swear. In a short time, all his mother’s efforts to teach him about the Bible and how to live a Godly life were gone.

When John turned 11, his father decided to take him to sea with him. John was excited to finally spend more time with his father. But, this too proved to be harmful to John’s way of life. He soon was even more wild and willful than before and would disobey orders. Finally, even his father could control him no longer and sent him off to a different ship, glad to be done dealing with his difficult and troublesome son.

In 1743, when John was 18, he joined the British navy. He acted just the same in the navy as he had while on his father’s ship: undependable, disrespectful, and disobedient. The last straw came when he was caught attempting to desert the navy. At this, the captain of his ship locked him up as a prisoner. While still at sea, the navy ship met up with a trade ship from Africa. The captain of the trade ship asked the navy captain if he had

any unfaithful sailors to “donate” for work on the trade ship. No one had to wonder who would be chosen.

He soon escaped from the trade ship and made his way to Africa in an attempt to make his fortune. In Africa, he met a slave trader and went to work with him. Unfortunately, he was tricked and ended up a slave himself. He was abused and mistreated, but still his heart remained hardened toward God. Soon John was rescued by a friend of his father and made his way back to England. It was on this journey back home John finally admitted his need for Christ.

On March 10, 1748, John awoke to the sound of screaming. As he became more fully awake, he realized the ship had encountered a storm and was in great danger of sinking. John, who could not swim, soon realized the gravity of their situation. Should the ship sink, he would surely die. In these moments of fearing the closeness of death, John remembered the long forgotten teachings of his mother. The Lord saw fit to deliver the ship, and from that day forward, John committed his life to the service of his Savior.

John continued his work as a slave trader and even became the captain of his own ship. As he grew in his walk with the Lord, he became convicted that what he was doing was wrong. Slaves often became sick or died as a result of the transportation conditions. John saw the sufferings of the poor Africans, taken from their families and homes against their will, in a whole new light.

When he quit working in the slave trade industry, John took a position as a tide surveyor in Liverpool. While he worked in Liverpool, he studied the Scriptures. As John grew in his faith, he wanted to tell others about the saving grace of Jesus. He prayed for God to show him how to tell others the message of salvation. He soon felt God wanted him to become a pastor. However, due to his rough past and minimal training, churches were reluctant to accept him for their church. After a long, hard struggle to find a church, he was finally accepted in 1764 for ministry at the church in Olney, a small village in England.

It was during his years in Olney, John wrote “Amazing Grace.” In this hymn, one of the many hymns he wrote, he tells the story of his wonderful conversion from an enemy of the Lord to one of His children. A fitting verse for John’s hymn is found in John 9:25b where it says, “*I was blind but now I see!*”

John was happy serving the Lord in Olney, but he still was deeply saddened by the sorrow he caused so many Africans by his involvement in the slave trade. He prayed that the Lord would show him some way he could help prevent further pain to the African people. His answer came to him in the form of a young man in need of advice. This young man was William Wilberforce. Young William was a new Christian, and he felt God had a purpose for his life. In a letter he wrote to John, he said, “I feel God has some important plan for my life. Will you help me discover it?” John was de-

lighted! William, as a government official, had an impact on the laws of England. Together, John and William worked hard to abolish the slavery laws in England. In 1807, just a few months before John died, the English government passed a law outlawing slave trade in England.

Shortly before his death, John said these simple but true words, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things, that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior!” Even though John did not live a life honoring God for the early part of his life, he understood that once he accepted God’s gift of salvation, Christ’s blood covered over all his sins and made him clean in the eyes of God. If he had dwelt on the bad things he had done in his life, he would have felt he could never measure up to God’s standards. And he would have been right. No one can save himself; we must all go through Christ. Romans 6:23 says, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

John’s tombstone reads:

John Newton, Clerk  
Once an infidel and libertine  
A servant of slaves in Africa  
Was  
By the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior  
Jesus Christ  
Preserved, restored, pardoned  
And appointed to preach the faith  
He had so long labored to destroy

Next time we sing “Amazing Grace”, remember the humble life of John Newton who truly was saved by God’s amazing grace.

## Works Consulted

For Those Who Dare: 101 Great Christians and How They Changed the World  
by John Hudson Tiner

Mr. Pipes and the British Hymn Makers  
by Douglas Bond

Hero Tales Volume II: A Family Treasure of True Stories From the Lives of Christian Heroes



## The Hard Way

By Bob Larsen

*“LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. 5 Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. 6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. 7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.” – Psalm 39:4-7*

It is often said, “experience is the best teacher.” Sometimes we have to learn things the hard way. Sometimes God leads us through difficult times to teach us something we need to learn. This is His way of making it real in our lives. David knew this better than most men. It was a long and dangerous road of difficulty from the moment he was anointed king by Samuel to the day he was finally crowned king. David had plenty of moments to reflect on how the Lord had led him. He had plenty of time to compare the plans he had had for his life and God’s plan for his life.

Many of us have similar moments of reflection. One such time for me was in February of 1990, when I made a spur of the moment decision that I was going to spend the weekend alone to fast, pray, and study scripture. The temperature was about 30 degrees in Elk River, so I decided it was probably 30 degrees everywhere. That sounded like a descent temperature for camping. Winter camping – it sounded fun. I had never camped in winter before, and I didn’t have any special gear. “How hard can it be?” I asked myself as I packed my camping gear into my blue 1982 Ford Escort on my way to work. When I got off from the printing press at 2 pm, I quickly put 200 miles behind me until I wound up at Gooseberry Falls State Park on the shore of Lake Superior. I climbed out of the car and took in the view.

There were just a few minor details that I had not taken into account. One thing was that it was a little colder up there than it was down in the cities. Okay, it was a lot colder. It was about 5 degrees, and there was a stiff wind blowing off the lake. It was very cold and very windy.

Another thing that I hadn’t considered was that when people fast, they can’t tolerate cold. Apparently, we need food to keep us warm. Fasting and winter camping don’t mix. However, I was determined to overcome this revelation, so I pulled out my tent and grabbed my tent stakes. Some of you probably know that it’s pretty hard to pound anything into the ground when the ground is frozen. Every time I tried to hammer my plastic tent stakes in the ground, they snapped. So far, my plan wasn’t working the way I had expected. Another camper finally took pity on me and gave me some iron

railroad stakes. With these, I finally got my tent up and crawled inside. I don’t know what I expected, but it almost felt colder inside than outside. I decided that winter just wasn’t a good time to be out camping.

I gave up on the camping, drove 13 miles into town, and gave up on the fasting at a Hardees’s just before it closed around 11 pm. I had given up camping and fasting, but I hadn’t given up on the campsite. I drove back and did the best I could to sleep in the car, waking up long enough to turn the heater on whenever it got too cold. In the morning, I gave up on the campsite too, packed my stuff, and headed back into town, where I booked a nice warm motel room. I had given up on so much that I decided I wasn’t going to give up on studying the scriptures. I’m glad I didn’t.

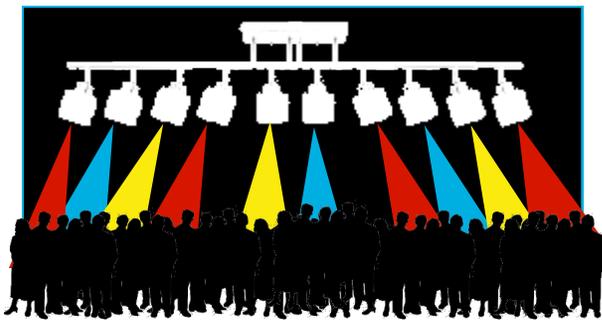
That day, I did my studying at Hardees’s. Psalm 39 kept coming to me and I spent most of the time studying it. Here, I noticed: David said in verse 4: *“LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.”* Boy, that hit home. In verse 5 it continued: *“Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.”* I had just had my great plan for how to spend the weekend picked apart before my eyes.

I began to understand personally how David was pointing out that our lives, plans, and ambitions are temporary and that they pass quickly. He used the words “vain” and “vanity” to describe them. My plans sure felt vain right then. That reminded me of King Solomon, who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes. Over and over in that book Solomon spoke of how brief our lives are and all that we plan and conspire is nothing before God. He compared them to a vapor that appears for a while and then vanishes.

Then I remembered that Solomon was David’s son. David probably taught him the things that he wrote in Psalm 39, but Solomon did not learn very well from his dad. He learned the hard way, through experience, the way children so often do. Ecclesiastes tells of all that Solomon went through before he came to the same conclusions that his dad had come to in Psalm 39. Then, I thought of my kids. They will have to learn some things the hard way, too. We are all children before God and often times the only way we learn is the hard way. We learn by experience.

We would do well to consider making Psalm 39 our prayer to the Lord, as we go through this hard experience called life.





## Stage Lighting in the Night - Apostasy's Source -

By Nathan Warner

*"...God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."* – 1 John 1:5-7

In the midnight hours of the world, false lights are emerging from the shadows to lead people astray. Increasing numbers of believers are lured off the Way into the crooked paths of spiritual night by these phantom lamp-bearers. These false lights are the apostles, teachers, and prophets of the apostate church. Conspiring to deceive believers, their teachings and influence are not from God, but are energized by all that is worldly, ungodly, and wicked. They disguise themselves as followers of Jesus, who is *"The true light, which gives light to everyone,"* - John 1:9, and lead people away from truth into deeper spiritual darkness. This is nothing new. Throughout the endless ages since Earth's creation, the Devil has always sought to convince or deceive men into abandoning their walk with God so that they will come under his influence. He does this by convincing people that God is not who He says He is:

*"[The serpent] said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'' <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* – Gen 3:1-5.

Or that he himself is God.

*"[T]he devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'"<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him,*

*"Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"*

– Mt 4:8-10.

Either way, Satan challenges God's nature. Is God really good? Is God really righteous and Holy? Is He really in charge? Does His word really mean what He says it means? Is He really Light? Satan's desire to supplant God is clear in Isaiah, where the king of Babylon is compared to Satan (referred to as Lucifer in some translations, meaning "light bearer" or "day star").

*"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! <sup>13</sup> You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; <sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'"* – Isaiah 14:12-14.



**Apostasy and heresy often appear as bearers of the light to believers, but really only market man's imitation of Christ on the crooked road that leads people astray**

Satan is the god of this world whom Paul says *"has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."* – 2 Cor 4:4. Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers by keeping them in darkness. If he cannot blind men by darkness alone, then he does so by imitating God as a false light, dazzling, dazing, and disorienting even believers. This is why Paul warns that, *"Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."* He pretends to be a bearer or messenger of God's light in order to lead people astray to walk after him into deeper darkness, instead of seeing the Light of the Gospel. And not

him only, but his servants also:

*“And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. <sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.” – 2 Corinthians 11:12-15*

Scripture warns us repeatedly of these false teachers that are inspired by their father, the devil to imitate servants of righteousness and lead people astray for selfish, worldly, and wicked reasons.

These are the guides that Jesus warned would come, pretending to believe in Him: *“See that no one leads you astray. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.” – Mt 24:4-5.*

Jesus further warned that this deception would ultimately try to fool even the elect. *“False christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.” – Mt 24:24.*

The people behind this apostate movement are energized by powers not of God, as Paul clarifies:

*“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,” – 1 Tim 4:1.*

Some do so for financial gain: *“...in their greed they will exploit you with false words.” – 2 Peter 2:3.*

Peter describes how these false teachers will cause the Way of Truth to be maligned and blasphemed because of what they do in the name of Jesus, the True Light: *“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.” – 2 Peter 2:1-2*

Today, there are so many false lights that malign the Truth, whether outside the church or inside the church – convincing and deceiving people (respectively) into believing that God is not who He says He is and that Jesus is not the only path to salvation. “And what is this worn-out, outmoded idea of salvation, anyway?” some ask.

As travelers in the way of Truth, we walk the straight and narrow Way. It is our duty as disciples of Jesus to watch the way of Truth, encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ to keep walking this blessed road of salvation by the blood of Jesus, guarding it against all deceptions that lure us away. In so doing, we will witness against the false lights in the world that malign God’s name and try to harm His peo-

ple. Let us keep our sleepless eyes on Jesus, remembering always that we are the children of the true Light.

*“For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.” 1 Thess 5:5-6*



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