

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. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In 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 lampstand 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.' ⁷ 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. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. ⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." – John 1:1-9.

Later, Jesus identifies himself as the Light: ¹² *"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:

"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.³⁶ 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.²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.²¹ 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,² 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,¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

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

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ 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.² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.⁴ 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, encouraging 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.

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: ¹⁴ “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.” ³⁵ *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.* ³⁶ *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.¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.¹⁴ 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 darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;¹⁰ 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.