

Light of the World

In a very real sense this lesson is an extension of this morning's lesson on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As we saw, the concept of the Spirit, God, Christ dwelling in us is dependent on whether we accept them and the truth that reveals them to us and make our decision to live that truth in our lives. Only then can we experience all the joy, support, and love that comes with having that truth of the Spirit dwelling in us.

Prov 4:18 **1**

18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

This metaphor comparing the righteous followers of God to light that shines even in the day is not new to the New Testament, but is very common throughout the scriptures. In Deborah's song of triumph in...

Judg 5:31 **2**

31 "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord; But let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might."

And in...

Dan 12:3 **3**

3 "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The path of the righteous, those who love God, those who have insight, the KJV reads wisdom, these all are spoken of as being lights that shine brighter than the sun or the stars. Then in the New Testament we have Christ's comparison of His servants to light...

Matt 13:42-43 **4**

43 Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Try an experiment sometime. Go into a room that is completely dark and light a candle. The room becomes light enough to see in. Then turn on a flashlight. All of a sudden the light of the candle seems to disappear in the more powerful light of the flashlight. Now turn on the ceiling light, both the candle and the flashlight pale in comparison to the overwhelming brilliance of the ceiling light. Do you see what is being said in these passages? Proverbs tells us that the path of the righteous is like the dawn of day, that moment when the light of the sun begins to be seen over the horizon and starts to dispel the darkness that has enveloped the night. Then that light grows steadily until it is at its brightest at the apex of the sun. Interestingly, the sky and the heavenly bodies that

are visible in that sky don't change. The stars, the planets, all of the elements that make up what is seen in the sky are the same whether morning or night. The difference is that when the sun is shining, its brilliance is such that it overwhelms any other light. We look into the sky at night when the sun's light is not shining and we can see all the lesser lights of the distant stars. One of the things that is so beautiful in the high country of the mountains is the multitude of stars that are visible. Those stars don't go away when the sun comes out, they are still there; it's just that their light, like the candle and the flashlight, are overwhelmed in the brightness of the greater and more powerful light of the sun. In Deborah's song she describes those that love God as being like the rising sun driving away the darkness in all its power, Daniel says that wisdom is like the combined light of the stars, and Christ tells us that the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of God, the Church.

It seems to me that the point of all of these passages is this; the most radiant thing on earth is the character of a righteous man. The world calls people of genius and intellectual force its lights. In God's estimation, which, by the way, is the only one that counts, He bestows that description on those who strive to be righteous in their faithful obedience.

That said let's look back at the passage from Proverbs...

Prov 4:18

5

18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

Not only is the comparison being made of the righteous to the light of dawn but it also speaks of that light growing in intensity, becoming brighter and brighter. Keeping, then, with the metaphor being used, the full day here refers to that moment in of the day when the sun is at its brightest. We understand that that moment of the day is when the sun is shining at its most direct point on the location where we are at. When we combine the thoughts of the

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“Path of the righteous”

here with the thoughts in of Matt. 13, it becomes obvious that the righteous will shine forth when they follow the path that God has established and Christ revealed.

In this lesson we are going to look at some thoughts concerning light and the analogy that the disciples of Christ are lights of the world. For the sake of our discussion we are going to use the three components of light as used by interior decorators. There is direct lighting, that is the lighting used that has a focus to it. The can lights here are a form of direct, focused lighting. Then there is indirect lighting, the type of lighting that isn't a focused source but generates light that illuminates, lights up a room, but doesn't come from a direct source. Then there is what is called mood lighting, illumination that is intended to generate a specific atmosphere or mood. Now, please don't panic, this isn't a lesson on the merits of interior decorating, but we want to expand on the comparisons that the scriptures make. The types of light that the righteous are to be seen in the lives that the righteous live. So, our first point then, is...

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1) What kind of life is a Christian to live

There are a lot of different answers to that question. But I think we want to stay with the theme of the comparison. The follower of Christ is described as being the light of the world...

Matt 5:14-15

8

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; **15** nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Paul uses this description when speaking to the Philippians in...

Phil 2:14-15

9

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; **15** so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

Have you ever just sat at the mall and watched people go by? There is an old saying that you can't tell a book by its cover. This is talking about looking at the way people dress or how they present themselves to the world and lumping them into some kind of category because of their appearance. When you just watch people you see all sorts of manner of dress and presentation. The point is that the world sees what we present and makes their judgment based on what they see. Whatever influence we may or may not have on the world will initially be founded on what we present to it. There is truth that, given an opportunity, we can overcome first impressions by acting different than what we might present ourselves to be, but the fact remains that that can only happen if we are given the chance to show we are different. That's what Paul is saying. We have to live our lives so that this wicked and perverse generation will see the light of God in how we live. Isn't that what Christ says in...

Matt 5:16

10

16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Christ illustrates for us at least part of the purpose in living a life for God, letting our light shine in the world, and that is so that the world, when it sees that a life can be lived for God, might choose to do so for themselves. Christians are to live their lives for God knowing that the world will be watching.

This brings us to our next point...

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2) The sad contrast of too many Christian's lives

We talked earlier about the idea that looks can be deceiving.

James 2:1-4

12

1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. **2** For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, **3** and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," **4** have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

James points out that just as the look of being shabby or someone who looks scary can conceal someone who is actually kind and good, so the look of being righteous can also be deceiving. If we are presenting ourselves to the world as being a follower of God through Christ and then the world sees us acting in a way that is opposed to God and the truth we show that world that living a life of hypocrisy is way of God. That is an ugly contrast in far too many lives. How many times do people use as their excuse for leaving God and the church how those that are supposed to be doing God's will act.

Matt 6:5

13

5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Jesus speaks about those who would appear to be righteous and are not, He calls them hypocrites. People who were striving to appear as those doing right but were ignoring the Word of God and His commandments.

This is the discussion we have been having over the past few weeks. Appearing to the world as if we are doing God's will when in reality we compromising and ignoring it. Even if our intention is to draw more people to give us the opportunity to teach, it is never right to do wrong even if our motives might be righteous.

It is our individual responsibility to make sure that we, I, am doing what is right in the eyes of God. I will stand in judgment for my actions and no one else's. I choose if my light will be a direct light to the world, if I will be an indirect light, or what effect my light will have on the world I live in. I decide if I am to grow or to remain stagnate.

Eph 4:11-16

14

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. **14** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted

and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Paul addresses this concept of growth often in his letters. We are to grow in all aspects of the Lord; that is what it means to...

15

“Study to show yourself approved”

Here then is our last point...

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3) How do we achieve the life God wants us to live

The beginning and the end of this is the lesson of the Holy Spirit. As we saw in 1 John 4 this morning, God abides in us when we abide in Him. Our abiding in Him is talking about how we apply His truth in our lives. Are we being faithfully obedient in all things? Are seeking to reflect the light of His love and truth in our lives?

John 15:5-8

17

5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. **7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

We bear fruit when we abide in Christ. God is glorified when we bear fruit. We are lights for God when we abide in Him through His truth. We grow when we study that truth and apply it in our lives. The brilliance of our light grows as we grow in that truth, and the more our light shines, the more fruit we bear.

Of a truth, God's children are the greatest light in the universe. The light and energy of the sun are absolutely necessary for life to exist and to grow, but the light of God's truth outshines the sun and is the source of the energy that causes eternal life to grow.