

# Shining As Lights In The World

By  
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One of the things that we must never forget is that there is much expected of Christians. This is something that each Christian should remind himself daily. It is something that ought to be a continual exhortation placed before the brethren.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). That light is not to be hidden, but utilized in a prominent way (Matt. 5:15-16). Light dispels darkness; it drives it away in a very powerful fashion. I worked in an underground mine off and on for eight years. This was total darkness. It was always fascinating to me how much darkness could be dispelled by the smallest amount of light. I urge you to remember that there is a huge amount that can be accomplished with a little light. Do not ever downplay this. I verily believe this to also be true when we consider the darkness of sin.

Let us move on to what Paul had to say in Philippians 2. The context to consider is verses 12-16. Paul encouraged the Philippian brethren to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). He explains to them that being "blameless and innocent and without blemish" (Phil. 2:15) is most definitely a part of that procedure. He tells them that they will be shining lights "in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation" (Phil. 2:15). Certainly Paul is pointing out that while it may be difficult to walk by faith, it is not impossible to do so. They are expected to stand out as different from others of the world. As a matter of fact, when they are working out their salvation they will inevitably "shine as lights in the world."

Paul's wording is reminiscent of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:5. Israel, as a chosen nation, should have shown how different they were from the nations about them. However, they spent an unfortunate amount of time murmuring and complaining about the circumstances of their delivery (Deut. 1:27). Notice how Paul says that the Philippian brethren ought not to repeat that egregious

mistake (Phil 2:14).

“Crooked and twisted” are terms describing the world about the Philippians. It was a world that was morally warped. It cannot be trusted. It has given itself over to every way and everything except to God! Spiritual perversion and distortion rule. It is not much different today. Yet saints can shine like the stars in the night sky. Isn't it interesting how the night sky is almost always described in relation to the stars and not by the vast expanse of darkness in which they shine?

Albert Barnes says, “The image here is not improbably taken from light-houses on a seacoast. The image then is, that as those light-houses are placed on a dangerous coast to apprise vessels of their peril, and to save them from shipwreck, so the light of Christian piety shines on a dark world, and in the dangers of the voyage which we are making.” People ought to look at Christians as examples of good conduct and holy living. We need to be conscious of and conscientious about being guiding lights in a sinful world.

We need to also notice that some of the statements about being shining lights are very emphatic. It is not “you might be seen.” It is rather “you are lights in the world” (Matt. 5:14; Eph. 5:8).

The shining lights are not for the benefit of other lights. It is for those with whom we come in contact in the world. Jesus said that Christians would be among the world (Jn. 17:15), but that doesn't mean we have to be like the world. We will come in contact with those in the world even in the most insignificant of activities. What will the worldlings see or hear when they observe us involved in such activities? Will they see and hear us making decisions and operating on the basis of the word of God? In other words, will we be shining lights? Or will our light be extinguished and we are found floundering in the darkness, being no help to ourselves or to others?

How do we become these shining lights? That is a fair question that is very easy to answer. First, you must be a Christian. One who believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Jn. 8:24; Rom. 10:9); confesses Him before men (Matt. 10:32); repents of sins (Lk. 13:3); and is baptized (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38;

22:16). A Christian has Christ, the Light of the world (Jn. 8:12), dwelling in him (Eph. 3:17). There is the source of the Christian's light. The Christian then pursues "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness {and} gentleness" (1 Tim. 6:11). One does not have to be smug or arrogant about this. Nor is there any need to "force the issue." Just by living in humble obedience as God's word says to do will produce a light that shines effectively in darkness. May we all strive to be such shining lights in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.