

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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Letting Your Light Shine

David Padfield

In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord told His disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:14-16).

"You are the light of the world" is one of those statements which should cause us to lift up our heads and make us realize what a glorious thing it is to be a Christian. The apostle Paul told the Ephesians, "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). We not only have received the "light" of the gospel of Christ, we have become transmitters of that light. Our light is meant to be seen by men. A Christian should be the same in his place of employment, the schoolroom or on the golf course as he is in the assembly of the saints. Jesus did not say, "You are the light of the church," but rather, "You are the light of the world." As we live in the world, our Christianity should be evident to all. Our good deeds ought to draw attention, not to ourselves, but to God.

The scribes and Pharisees performed "all their works they do to be seen by men" (Matt. 23:5). As an expression of their love of being seen by men, they would "make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments." Phylacteries were small leather boxes bound on the "left arm, toward the heart, and on the forehead. They were capsules containing on parchment four passages of Scripture: Ex. xiii. 1-10; xiii. 11-16; Deut. vi. 4-9; xi. 13-21. That for the head was to consist of a box with four compartments, each containing a slip of parchment inscribed with one of the four passages. The phylactery of the arm was to contain a single slip, with the same four passages written in four columns of seven lines each. The black leather straps by which they were fastened were wound seven times round the arm and three times round the hand. They were revered by the Rabbis as highly as the scriptures" (Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies In The New Testament*, Vol. I, p. 123). The wearing of phylacteries was to remind the wearer of his obligations to the law. The authority for wearing them was purely traditional. The Pharisees made the leather case rather large, that their "righteousness" might be more visible.

Such activities as the sounding of a trumpet, the disfiguring the face or the wearing of phylacteries do not cause men to glorify God -- they serve only as an embarrassment to our Heavenly Father. I submit to you that Christians today often act like the Pharisees in the days of Jesus. They often create their own "traditions" which serve only to draw attention to themselves. In this article we want to examine several manifestations of this attitude.

Our Clothing

God commands us to wear "modest apparel" (1 Tim. 2:9-10), but He does not command us to dress like freaks from the last century. The Amish of the country are known by their clothing -- it is certainly modest and unassuming, but they go out of their way to stand out in society and draw attention to themselves.

Friend, there is nothing wrong with wearing nice clothing. Lydia, the Christ convert on European soil, was a "seller of purple" (Acts 16:14). The clothing she sold, true sea purple, was worth twice its weight in gold. Lydia was evidently a woman of considerable means. I can not picture one selling extravagant clothing while dressed in rags.

The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was adorned in "Fine linen and purple" (Prov. 31:22). Yes, God commands His people to wear "modest apparel," but you do not have to dress like a refugee from a concentration camp who was clothed by the Red Cross in order to be pleasing to God.

Our Language

God condemns "coarse jesting" (Eph. 5:4), but He does not ban all humor. Coarse jesting would include vulgar or lewd joking or language. Humor is not sinful -- our Lord used humor in His teaching (Matt. 23:23-26). Humor is necessary for a normal life. If you can't laugh at yourself other folks will do it for you.

Our Worship

God commands order in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:40), but He does not require that our worship services look like a funeral service.

The Israelites were commanded to serve God with "joy and gladness of heart" (Deut. 28:45-48; cf. 1 Kings 8:66; Ezra 6:22). The Psalmist said he would "offer sacrifices of joy" unto the Lord (Psa. 27:6). After his sin with Bathsheba, David pleaded with God to restore the joy of his salvation (Psa. 51:12). The word of God is to be received with joy (Matt. 13:20, 44). When Philip brought the word of God to Samaria "there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8). When the Ethiopian eunuch arose from the waters of baptism "he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39).

Our worship services are to be conducted "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). Unfortunately, many congregations today are so "orderly" that sincere worshipers are almost embarrassed to say "Amen" at the preaching of the word! The ones who should be embarrassed are those whose Christianity has caused their soul to shrivel up and die. I have preached in places where the brethren looked liked they were weaned on dill pickles and baptized in vinegar. If your religion makes you that miserable you do not have Christianity -- just a poor substitute. Let us worship decently and in order, but with joy in our heart!

Conclusion

God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts. We are living in the midst of people who dwell in spiritual darkness. Lost souls will never find the light anywhere in the world except from you and me and the gospel we preach. Our friends are watching us. Are our lives a silent rebuke to them?

Call God A Liar

Frank Himmel

Have you ever been called a liar? Chances are, you didn't like it! Well, how do you suppose God likes being called a liar? Would anyone really do that? Yes indeed. John wrote, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar..." (1 Jn. 1:10). How so? God testifies that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). If we deny that, we make Him a liar.

Using this simple approach, it is clear that God is often charged with lying. Every time someone denies what God affirms in the Bible, they are in essence calling Him a liar.

Those who teach evolution say God lied about how we got here. He says He created us in the beginning (Gen. 1:1). The evolutionist, despite having no definite information as to when or how we arrived, says whatever the truth is, it is anything but what God said.

A lot of folks believe God lied about money. He said that he who loves money will not be satisfied with money (Ecc. 5:10), and that even when we have an abundance, life is more than our possessions (Lk. 12:15). The way some folks prize their things, it is evident they really don't believe that. They say God lied.

A good many preachers make God a liar about salvation. He said, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mk. 16:16). They say baptism has nothing to do with it. God lied.

Too many think God lied about divorce and remarriage. He said, "Whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another woman commits adultery..." (Mt. 19:9). Many of us say whoever doesn't mean whoever, fornication isn't the only exception, and in the end, adultery isn't really adultery. God didn't get anything right on this subject!

God says a Christian may be severed from Christ and fall from grace (Gal. 5:4). Yet how many say that cannot happen?

God says the gospel is His power to salvation (Rom. 1:16). Man often says that is not enough carnal incentives must be added to attract (and keep) people.

Do not be deceived. It is the devil who is the liar, the father of lies (Jn. 8:44).