

We Are the Lights of The World

(Go To Meeting)

Durrell Brown—January 6, 2023

I have a number of contacts, family member and brethren who are in some of the other organizations that came out of God's Church, and I still talk with them. I have relatives who were part of the Church in the earlier years. I made sure that they all got on the *Plain Truth* list because I ordered it for them, and there were several who did come into the Church.

I want to talk about our being *the light to this world!* Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. He was the Light of the world when He came; He says that. We'll look at that and see that as long as He was in the world that He was the Light of the world. ***But He has given us that responsibility now!***

It's amazing how much God's Word talks about the fact that ***we are salt and light in the world!***

John 9:4—*Jesus said*: "I must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is still day. When *the* night comes, no one is able to work. As long as I am in the world, **I am the Light of the world**" (vs 4-5).

The first half of His ministry—3-1/2 years—and was crucified. We know that He will finish the balance of His ministry when He comes back and sets up the Kingdom.

In Matt. 5 Jesus says that we are the 'salt of the earth.'

Matthew 5:1: "But seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain; and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth *and* taught them, saying" (vs 1-2).

He got away from the crowds. As we know He initially attracted large numbers of people. His ministry was different from what they have been used to. It was different from John the Baptist. God was beginning this era of the work through Him. So, He had to get away from the multitudes to teach His disciples this message that we're going to learn here today.

Verse 6: "Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall find mercy. Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called *the* sons of God. Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when they shall reproach you, and shall persecute you, and

shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My sake" (vs 6-11).

Verse 12: "Rejoice and be filled with joy, for great *is* your reward in heaven; **for in this same manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth,** but if the salt has become tasteless, with what shall it be salted? For it no longer has any strength, but *is* to be thrown out and to be trampled upon by men" (vs 12-13).

Then He gives us an extremely important concept that I want to talk about in detail.

Verse 14: "**You are the light of the world.** A city that is set on a mountain cannot be hid."

We are beginning to see the importance of our light and the light that we are going to be to the world in our calling.

Verse 15: "Neither do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand; and it shines for all who *are* in the house. In the same way also, **you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who is in heaven**" (vs 15-16).

Since Christ has finished His work, He was the Light of the world while He was here, and He has called us—the Church—and He's left us with the responsibility now of ***being salt and light*** to the world. He goes on to teach us what that looks like in action.

John 9:5: "As long as I am in the world, **I am the Light of the world.**"

He has left us now, as the Church, as His Body, to be salt and light to the world.

We're to let our light shine; that's one of the things that we have constantly pointed out. It's interesting to me how with the troubles and problems that we are having in the world, all of the degeneration of worship, changes and persecution that is coming; the blindness! It's difficult to talk to people and discuss Biblical things. They're so hostile, and the tendency is to withdraw from men and protect ourselves, and turn the brightness of our light down.

I run into a lot of problems even as an 'old timer' talking to people about God's Way and God's Word. They're just not interested in it. But we have to be salt and light; we can't hide our light 'under a

bushel.' God has called us to be salt and light, 'and so much more as we see the day approaching' (Heb. 10:25).

I have gotten into problems this past year trying to talk to people about preparing themselves for the crisis that is coming because of the Corona Virus and the downturn in the world's economy. Most people that I talk to—those not in the Church and those in the Church—don't want to be troubled with the reality of what is happening and how it's going to get worse.

We, as the Church—especially as the elders and leaders—***have a charge and responsibility from Almighty God*** that we're to warn His people and the world! To be the lights and the leaders.

I remember the first sermon I gave after being ordained an elder in the Church. I was serving in the South—Mississippi, Alabama; I worked a 5 state area for about 4-5 years—and many of you 'old timers' remember that we were blessed with new automobiles every year. I remember it was the first new car I had ever driven, let alone kept and used, was Plymouth Fury 3, a Chrysler product. It was the first car I had owned, in a sense, we did have to pay a portion of it; they were not free. I took good care of that car, because that was the first new car I had ever had as a possession.

As many of you are familiar with the situation in the South, this was 1967, I'm, a '67 graduate of the college and worked the 5 states out of Mobile, Alabama. Many times I was stopped in traveling to visit the brethren and I remember I passed a Fury 1, and it turned out to be an unmarked car of Revenue Agents. These are people who catch bootleggers. Mississippi was a 'dry state' at that time. You could by alcohol, but it was illegal.

Black's who were driving new cars were either preachers or those who drove hearses. So, if you had a hearse with a casket in it you didn't have to open the casket for the Revenue Agents. I was stopped on one occasion and passed this Fury 1 and it was an drab olive, common looking car. The speed limit was about 55 at that time in Mississippi, and he was doing about 50 so I passed him. He turned his siren on and two of them got out and drew their weapons and came up and searched my car. They wanted to know why I was out there driving this fast with this car. They had me open the trunk and all I had in there was my attaché case and a box of booklets and articles from the work.

They said, 'He's got nothing, he's another reverend.' So, my light was shining! I did not get a ticket, but they warned me that they were going to follow me into this next town and you better not do five miles over the speed limit.

So, we are to be salt and light, and God has set us to do that. On a number of occasions I was blessed in that way. I was keeping the Law and pleasant to talk to and courteous and respectful of authority. We have been given that charge, brethren, to be salt and light.

One of the problems we're having now with the Church is that we find that many are neglecting to assemble. We need to be seen keeping God's commandments and living God's way. My charge to us all in what I want to emphasize is that we have been called to be salt and light, and we're to let our light shine.

I remember the first messages I gave at one of the services, I had remembered a story of a shipman who saved his crew members on this passenger ship. I think it was between the two world wars, and this was an English vessel. The boiler blew up on this vessel, but they were able to get all of the people on the ship into life rafts and get them off the ship before it sank.

Back in those days the rafts were just open with a limited number of provisions and this kind of thing. The rescue finally came and they searched the ocean and made wide searches and had airplanes out there and they found all of the sailors and their life rafts except one. They searched for several days and finally gave up the search after about a week and assumed that that raft had capsized or had been lost.

For those of you have been on cruises know that if there is an emergency they will put an officer on the life raft to be the knowledgeable person to help people survive. After about five days this officer began to lose hope and faith that they would be rescued. Night had fallen and the weather had changed and the sea was getting rough. They had run out of food and water. They were cold and wet because the waves were coming over the life raft.

They had lost hope! As he stood there in the life raft he surveyed the situation and saw that all he had was the little first aid kit and one match left in the matches that would strike while wet.

In his desperation and his feeling that all was futile, he struck that last match. He watched it until it burned down to where he couldn't hold it any longer and dropped it into the wet floor of the raft and consigned himself to the fate that they would not be rescued.

But there was a commercial vessel about a half mile or so from where they were, and the observer on that commercial ship thought he saw a light to his left. Being a trained observer he looked at that direction again to make sure that he knew about where it was on the horizon. He had the

officer that worked the spotlight to shine the light in that direction and in just a few minutes they picked up that orange life raft riding on top of the waves and were able to dispatch a vessel over and rescue those people on that raft.

- How bright is your light?
- Is it shining bright enough that you can be seen and rescued?
- Will your light burn long enough to insured that you will be rescued?

We have come into some serious times in the whole world, and the tendency is to want to hide and not be the lights that we are called to be to this world.

God has called us to be lights, and let our light shine! It's a very difficult to witness to people. I've experienced that. As I talk to people who are not church members, and even in some cases our Church members, I've gone back to Jesus did. He spoke in parables.

It's interesting when you see His approach in His ministry, He spoke plainly to His disciples. We just saw the passages where He left the multitudes and went up and talked 'straight talk' to His disciples, but always spoke in parables to the multitudes. I learned that early in my ministry as a black man in the South; you just couldn't come up and confront white people. You had to speak to them in parables, and the Truth would hit them on the way home from Church.

God has called us to be salt and light, and to let our light shine.

Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, even as some *are* accustomed to do; but rather, encouraging *one another*, **and all the more as you see the day drawing near.**"

Our churches are getting smaller and smaller. It's difficult. We have elderly members who used to be able to get to Church and be helped enthusiastically by family members, but times have gotten hard. So, it's difficult for a lot of the elderly to get to Church.

Verse 26: "For if we willfully go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the Truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of inevitable judgment and of fierce fire, which will devour the adversaries *of God*" (vs 25-27).

Verse 31: "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"

How do we correct these things happening? Some of us are old and tired, and we don't see that

well. We can't drive fast like we use to. We have to use our GPS to tell us when to turn, because we can't see and read the signs.

Verse 32: "But remember the earlier days when, after you were enlightened, you endured much conflict in *your* sufferings. On the one part, you were made a public spectacle by both insults and severe trials; and on the other part, you became companions of those who were enduring the same things" (vs 32-33).

I remember my first years in the Church, I lived in New York at that time and we would go down and get into it with the 'street preachers.' I enjoyed that. I was single at time, so if I got martyred, it didn't matter with me. I didn't have a family at that time and I would go down and pick on these street preachers. There were several of us. We were in Spokesman's Club so we knew how to talk, and we knew about the Sabbath and Holy Days.

The 'street preachers' weren't talking about that stuff. They were just preaching that Christ was coming and you better be ready. We'd interrupt them. I remember one time several of us were in an area and one of the 'street preachers' stopped and started preaching to us. He realized that this group of guys were different. 'You all are Christians, aren't you?' One of them in our group said 'We were until just a few minutes ago.'

We should remember the early days when we had that zeal of first love. We weren't afraid to teach and speak the Gospel, and confront people with it.

I remember that my older brother and his wife came into the Church. My sister came into the Church. My youngest brother just could not get it. I couldn't understand why he couldn't get it. The Gospel seemed so clear to me when God opened my mind. I remember sitting down and talking to him, and I said, 'Read what it says. Tell what that means.' He couldn't do it. For the life of me I couldn't understand that.

If God has not opened a person's mind and given him/her the understanding opening the mind they just can't get it. So, God has been merciful to us and opened our minds and we ought to be salt and light to the world. We're not to hide. It's getting difficult our here now to be a Christian, serve God and love God.

I was a truck driver for a lot of years. I would give these guys a hard time. They would come in on the weekends. We'd get back Friday and they've been working all week and they sit out there and drink, smoke and they would get so drunk they couldn't drive to the liquor store and get liquor, so

they would send me. I would say, 'I can't do this, I'm helping you guys break the law and break God's Law.'

It's an amazing thing to have to live Godly and be salt and light to the world I did gain a great deal of respect because I towed the line and didn't go to the same excessives as they did.

Verse 34: "For you not only showed compassion to me in my bonds, but also gladly endured the plunder of your possessions, knowing within yourselves that you have a greater and more enduring possession in *the* heavens. For this *very* reason, do not cast away your confidence, which is bringing a great reward" (vs 34-35).

We're going to be rewarded greatly for being salt and light.

Verse 37: "For *it is* but a short time *until* He Who is coming will come, and will not delay."

We lost several brethren that I know—two deacons and an elder—so time is short for a lot of us.

Verse 38: "Now, *it is written*, 'The just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul does not delight in him.' But we are not of *those* who draw back unto destruction; rather, we are of faith unto *the saving of the soul*" (vs 38-39).

I talk to an elder in one of the dissident groups just recently. I was telling him about this message that I was going to give. He said, 'Why are you going to be giving a sermon like that? That's all the Church did in the past, talk about all the bad things that are coming and all of that.'

I said, 'We have a charge to give meat in due season. Most of us have never lived in times as bad as they are right now. So, we have to give meat in due season. We have to let our light shine and set examples. That's our charge and responsibility. We are the watchman on the wall. We have a charge from Him to warn God's people. We can't go hide somewhere and hope that it doesn't come our way and keep quiet and not preach the Truth. ***We must not only preach the Truth, we must live it and let our lights shine, so much more as we see the day approaching!***

2-Timothy 4:2: "Preach the Word! Be urgent in season and out of season; convict..."

Make sure you understand what we're talking about. What the Word says that we should be thinking, doing and believing.

"...rebuke..." (2).

I remember Ted Armstrong and Rod

Meredith were somewhere and they were rebuking this old guy, and he started beating up on them—Armstrong and Meredith were young bucks at the time. I think Rod Meredith was a Golden Gloves boxer at one time, so he held him while Ted Armstrong got the car close enough where they could push him away and get in the car to get away from him. You have to be knowledgeable of who you rebuke and:

"...encourage, with all patience and doctrine" (v 2).

I've had several men and women over the years who told me as I was helping them and correcting them, 'Look, you've said enough, get your hat and go now.'

Verse 3: "For there shall come a time when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but according to their own lusts they shall accumulate to themselves *a great number of* teachers, having ears itching to *hear what satisfies their cravings*."

I talked to one long-time elder in the Church, and I said, 'Why did you leave, giving up the Sabbath and Holy Days, and so forth?' *He said*, 'Hey, if I can find an easier way to make it into the Kingdom, I'm going to take it, and that's what I did.'

"...**there shall come a time when they will not tolerate sound doctrine**, but according to their own lusts they shall accumulate to themselves *a great number of* teachers, having ears itching to *hear what satisfies their cravings*, and they shall turn away their own ears from the Truth; and they shall be turned aside unto myths. **But as for you, be vigilant in all things, endure hardships...**" (vs 3-5)—that's rough!

Many have lost jobs because of the Sabbath and Holy Days!

"...do *the* work of an evangelist... [preaching] ...fully carry out your ministry. For I [Paul] am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (vs 5-6).

I feel that sometimes—*often!* Paul went through a lot. He was left for dead three times. I finally somewhat understand why he had so much faith. The first time he was beaten almost to death and God healed him. 'I can take more chances now, God saved me.'

Verse 7: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. From this time forward, a crown of righteousness is laid up for me... [keep that hope alive] ...which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day—and not to me only, but also to all who love His appearing"

(vs 7-8).

Christ asked: 'When the Son of man comes will He find faith on the earth?' *The implication is that there will be very little faith on the earth!*

We see that a lot of Christians will be martyred, but their lights will be shining, as they traditionally have and we have seen from the history of the Churches, and what happened with the seven Churches in Revelation

The same problems that those seven Churches had, we have today. I personally feel that we were Philadelphians when I came into the Church in 1965. we were on fire. The times in the country were terrible, but we were out there getting it done! I remember my first Feast and the guy I was sharing a room with said that he was ready to be martyred. I had just gotten out of the military and thinking, I don't know about this Church, I'm not ready to die.

He was serious! I had to come to that point. I did everything I could to keep from getting hurt, let alone killed. So, here we are at this particular juncture and entering the worst of the winter season and we have seemingly enough rain now to give us a little reprieve from the worry of not having enough water and crops and this kind of thing. Things are looking a little bit up if we don't get into a war.

- Are we going to let our lights shine?
- Are we going to straighten up our bent over backs and stand tall and come out of hiding?
- Are we going to begin to glorify God and be salt and light in this world?

If the salt has lost its saltiness, if we have lost the ability to be sufficiently worthy that God will hold back a continuation of the problems that the whole world is seeing, for the elect's sake the Tribulation is going to be shortened and limited. Are we going to be a part of that group who are faithful and ready to be at the wedding feast?

It's interesting that the three parables that deal with the wedding: the Ten Virgins are qualifying, but because they had to wait, half of them were not as prepared as they should have been and thought they were and they missed the wedding.

Are we in a situation like that, where we're just coasting along and running out of the power of the Spirit to sustain us this crisis and the next crisis, and so forth?

It's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Lord! We have been set as the watchman to warn God's people.

- Are we doing that?
- Are we letting our lights shine?
- Are we letting Christ be seen in us?
- Are we studying and praying?
- Are we standing in faith?
- Are we willing to suffer persecution?
- Are we continuing to be filled with His Holy Spirit so that when the real difficult times come we can stand?
- Will our light be bright enough to be seen and we can be rescued?
- Will it be bright enough that those who are following us will feel confident and safe to continue doing what we do?

We've been given a tremendous charge and responsibility as the firstfruits of God's creatures, those whom He's calling to be part of the foundational Kingdom of God!

I shudder when I think about we are called as firstfruits; we've been considered valuable enough to God that He has called us at this time. We are like the special forces of the military.

Perhaps you have seen the rigorous training that those special forces and teams in the military, all of those who have to go through that rigorous training to be the front-liners who charge into the warfare first.

We have been called for those types of responsibilities because during the Millennium they will only have the flesh. We have to overcome our fallen nature, the flesh and the devil! We're qualifying under a higher standard. So, more is expected of us!

- Are we going to wash out?
- Are we going to fail?

I've looked at some of those programs that the military people have to go through. I understand that most of them 'wash out'! Most of them can't endure! ***But we must endure to the end!*** Keeping God's Law, going through persecution and letting our lights shine! Being sons and daughters of God and trusting in Him! We can't let our fire go out.

If we're not careful our fire will go out and once we lose the Spirit of God, God is under no obligation to revive us. We must keep our lights burning, the oil in our lamps—the Holy Spirit empowering us—strengthen our feeble knees, lift up our hands and finish this work and calling that God has given us.

We know that the Tribulation and all of that is going to be limited because of us, if we are in that

group that has to go through it. Christ set us and left us a supreme example of how to do it.

- He studied
- He prayed
- He trusted God
- He lived a perfect life

2-Timothy 3:12: “And indeed, **everyone who desires to live Godly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted.**”

That’s part of the plan, part of the testing! We all will suffer persecution.

Paul says to follow him as he follows Christ. The Apostle Paul and all of those with him set a fantastic example for us.

1-Corinthians 11:1: “**Be imitators of me, exactly as I also am of Christ.**”

He spent three years more in personal training and teaching. We have not been blessed with that kind of personal training. But we have Paul’s books, so we understand why he was so steadfast and so sure of what he was doing.

He was fearless. He felt like giving up, but for the sake of the Church and the example that he could be to and for us, God used him powerfully to write all of these books. Paul wrote most of the book of the New Testament so that we can know just what is required of us and how zealous we’re supposed to be, and how filled with God’s Spirit we must be.

- we’re to follow Paul as he followed Christ
- we’ve been called to finish the work that God has given the Church to do

God will strengthen, guide and empower us to do it!

I hope this has been helpful to see that God is still with us. We are watchmen on the wall and we are to warn God’s people.

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 9:4-5
- 2) Matthew 5:1-2, 6-16
- 3) John 9:5
- 4) Hebrews 10:25-27, 31-35, 37-39
- 5) 2 Timothy 4:2-8
- 6) 2 Timothy 3:12
- 7) 1 Corinthians 11:1