

5. Shining as Lights in the Night (1Q 2026 Christ in Philippians and Colossians)

Biblical material: Phil. 2:12–30; Rom.3:23, 24; Rom. 5:8; 2 Tim. 4:6; 1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:21, 13; Luke 7:2.

Quotes

- Embrace a formula or a list in order to “live the Christian life,” and you are doomed to frustration. *Gene Edwards*
- God leads us forward, not back. The Christian life means looking forward to the coming of Christ, like runners straining for the finishing tape. *Stephen H. Travis*
- Have you ever noticed the difference in the Christian life between work and fruit? A machine can do work; only life can bear fruit. *Andrew Murray*
- The quality of life is more important than life itself. *Alexis Carrel*
- The man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unfortunate but almost disqualified for life. *Albert Einstein*
- We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won’t need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don’t fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine. *Dwight L. Moody*

Questions

In what way do we best “let our light shine”? How do our beliefs affect the lives we lead? What does it mean to be “living in the light”? Is it a question of deciding that we have to shine, or does our experience with God have that natural result? In the context of the great controversy, what does this study have to say about the conflict of light and darkness?

Bible summary

Philippians 2:12–30 gives instructions to Christians as to how to live. God makes us right through his grace (see Romans 3:23, 24). “God demonstrates his love for us in that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.” Romans 5:8. Paul recognizes that the time of his death is approaching (see 2 Timothy 4:6). Timothy would remind the church about Paul’s teaching (see 1 Corinthians 4:17). Paul gives specific personal requests (see 2 Timothy 4:21, 13). The centurion cared about his sick servant (see Luke 7:2).

Comment

This study on “Shining as Lights in the Night” is really about how we live the Christian life. We all need to ask ourselves, “Are we truly living?” Deep down in us all is that chilling fear of meaninglessness. That no one cares whether we live or die. And that there’s no point anyway... Don’t claim that you’ve never felt that in that stark cold greyness of the morning as you look into that anxious face in the mirror. Of course the easiest answer is to do nothing. Think nothing. Be nothing. Those sad people who appear in every poll as “don’t know”. Those who didn’t have an opinion. Those who had no idea about anything.

Our experience of the Christian life is so full of meaning. In contrast to pointless lives filled with the trivial, we get to experience life in all its fullness, full of the meaning God provides.

For what did Jesus come to do for us? “I’ve come to bring you life, life full to overflowing.” (John 10:10). He came to bring us full life, the life of God now and eternally. Which means that most people today are not really fully alive. They are only playing at being alive, says Jesus. You know how kids play. Imaginary ideas, fantasy games that usually begin: Let’s pretend. How do people play that game with their actual lives? Let’s pretend that all is well with us when it’s not. That’s what Jesus came to end—the idea of this pointless game we play with our lives. For the “let’s pretend” idea comes from the Devil. Let’s pretend is lying, and the Devil is a liar from the beginning, for he said: “You will not surely die.” And that is the greatest game of all, pretending

that we shall never die, that we shall live forever. How ridiculous!--but how many do live that lie? Jesus came to end that lie. To give meaning and purpose to our lives. Without him we shall die eternally. But with him we have full life—and eternal life!

This captivating concept is what engages us. This is more than “fun” or a chasing after the “feel good” factor. For how do we deal with the way we *feel* about living the Christian life? Feelings can be both a help and hindrance in the Christian life. When you are having a “mountain top” experience the emotion of praise and joy can be absolutely wonderful: a thrilling and inspiring sense of God’s presence that uplifts and sustains. But when you are “down in the valley” the negative feelings can lead to spiritual discouragement and depression. Like David in the Psalms, we need to “call to mind” what we *know* to be true, and trust in God, however bad we might *feel*. So we should ask ourselves, “Where is my confidence? In myself and how I feel from day to day? Or is my confidence in the promises of God?”

The Christian life is the assurance of God in our all our experiences: happy, sad, good and bad. He is the one who walks with us now, and he is also the one who welcomes us at the end. What’s not to like?

“At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. You are to live as children of light (and the fruit of light is everything that's good and right and true), demonstrating what the Lord really appreciates. Don't have anything to do with the pointless things that darkness produces—instead expose them. It's shameful even to speak about the things such people do secretly, but when anything is exposed by the light then it's revealed as it is. Light makes everything visible.” Ephesians 5:8-13.

Now you are what? *Light in the Lord*. How should we live? *As children of light*. Where do we belong? *To the Light, to the God of light*. And having accepted this light, having become children of this marvellous light, having known the light of the world, what do we become? Lights to illuminate the world, Jesus told us, his light-filled disciples: “You are the light of the world,” “let your light shine.” Matthew 5:14, 16.

Once we were darkness. Now we are light. We are part of God’s light, we reflect his light, we are children of the light. We hardly need reminding that day and night are opposites, so what communion has light with darkness? (see 2 Corinthians 6:14). How can we be light and darkness? No way! Listen again:

The blind writer Helen Keller described her experience: “I can see, and that is why I can be so happy, in what you call the dark, but which to me is golden. I can see a God-made world, not a man-made world.”

So we live as we should, following the way of the light. We can’t say we belong to the light and commit the deeds of darkness—if we do, we give up the light and wander back into the darkness of sin and death. Being in the light, children of the light, being changed into the nature of light means that we find ourselves more and more unable to tolerate darkness, and always striving onwards to the ever shining light. “For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of the darkness,’ shone in our minds to illuminate the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Ellen White Comments

So there is life in God’s word. Christ says, “The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life.” John 6:63. “He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life.” John 5:24. In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God. {COL 38}

All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are recipients of the life of the Son of God. However able and talented, however large their capacities, they are replenished with life from the Source of all life. He is the spring, the fountain, of life. {5BC 1113-4}